OVERLORD 2 The dark warrior Kugane Maruyama

illustration by so-bin

オーバーロード 2 漆黒の戦士

丸山くがね

Prologue

The Overlord's Office in the Great Tomb of Nazarick was very luxurious. Every piece of furniture in the room was elegant in design, tasteful and exotic. The crimson red soft carpet on the floor doesn't make a sound when you walk on it. Flags of various designs were draped on the walls deep within the room. An impressive black wooden desk was placed inside the room; the owner was sitting on the all-black leather chair. Wearing a long black robe that seemed to absorb light, if there was one sentence to describe that person, it would be ‘Overlord of Death’.

The exposed head was a skull without any skin or meat. Bits of dark light flickered in the red light that shined within the dark eye sockets. He was the man whose name was Momonga, but now known as Ainz Ooal Gown, taking the name of his guild. Ainz folded his arms which consists of only bones. The 9 rings worn on his fingers sparkles under the reflection of the ‘Continual Light’.

“Well well… What should I do now?” Known as 'Dive Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game', this internet game allows players to enter a virtual world and experience the world of Yggdrasil. On its last day of operation, it transported Ainz in the form of his game avatar, the form of a skeleton, into an unknown alternate world for unknown reasons. It had already been 8 days since that happened. During this time, he observed his residence, the Great Tomb of Nazarick and his servants. He found out this world was similar to the game, prompting Ainz to take the next course of action.

“Your will is our command, Ainz-sama.” A beautiful lady who was standing by silently replied after hearing Ainz question. She was a flawless beauty in a pure white gown, her gentle smile just like a goddess. Her shiny black hair was a direct contrast to her gown. Her black angelic wings coming out from her waist covered her legs. “Is that right, Albedo? I am pleased by your loyalty.” She was the Overseer of Great Tomb of Nazarick, 'Albedo'. She was in charge of the 7 NPCs who were the Floor Guardians of Nazarick.

When Ainz and his guildmates constructed the Great Tomb of Nazarick in the past, Albedo's setting had been a servant NPC working here. But she has since gained sentience and swore fealty to Ainz. This is a delightful situation, but also a heavy burden for Ainz who was just a salary man. Maintaining his conduct as the master when facing his underlings and the responsibility of running the organization efficiently as an Overlord was pressurizing. The biggest problem was his severe lack of information in this unknown alternate world.

“…So, the next report?”

“Here, Ainz-sama.” He browsed through the words written with pen immediately after receiving the documents. This was a report submitted by the Guardian of the 6th floor, Aura Bella Fiora. It clearly states that they haven't met any Yggdrasil players like Ainz or found any sign of them.

As for the investigation of the large forest near Great Tomb of Nazarick, they have successfully mapped the area to the mountain range on the opposite side of the forest and located a lake. Ainz nodded. He felt at ease as they had not located other players, the most dangerous people to him here.

“I see. Pass down my order, Aura and her team are to continue their task.”

“By your command—” A gentle knock came from the door. Albedo looks at Ainz for his reaction, bows and walked to the door. After confirming the identity of the visitor, Albedo announced: “Shalltear is requesting an audience.”

“Shalltear? Its fine, let her in.”

With permission from Ainz, a young girl of about 14 wearing a fluffy black gown entered elegantly. Her skin was white as wax and her facial features was pleasant, a true beauty of the world. Her long silver hair sways with each step she took, her large bosom which doesn’t match her apparent age bounced along as well. She was the Guardian for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors, ‘true vampire’ Shalltear Bloodfallen.

“Good day Ainz-sama.”

“You too, Shalltear. What business do you have with me today?”

“I came by to admire Ainz-sama's handsome face.” Ainz skull was expressionless, but the red light shining in his eye sockets flickered for a moment. He thought about ordering her to stop with the useless compliments, but decided not to. Albedo was glaring at Shalltear, while Shalltear's crimson eyes turned murky from excitement.

Albedo's smile changed. Her face was still smiling, she was as beautiful as ever, but her face can no longer be described as smiling. It was a face of a devil. But Ainz breathed a sigh of relief because Albedo was glaring at Shalltear, not at him.

“You must be satisfied now; you may leave Shalltear. Ainz-sama and I are discussing the future of Great Tomb of Nazarick right now, please don't disturb our important discussion.”

“…Greetings before going into the main topic is basic courtesy right… Old ladies past their prime are such a pain. Maybe they are anxious because their expiry date is over?”

“…Don't you feel that food with so much preservatives that it has no expiry date is no different than poison? Compared to that, food past their expiry date is safer right?”

“…Don't look down on food poisoning. Some bacteria are infectious.”

“…More important will be what can be eaten huh? It might look like a full plate of food samples, but in actual fact… Right?”

“…Food samples? I will kill you okay.”

“…Who is past expiry date? Hummm.”

The two beauties bickered before Ainz with expressions that were hard to describe. It's an expression that could chill even a love over a billion years old. Suppressing the urge rushing to his head, Ainz said before the devastating fight begun: “Knock it off you two.”

The two present their brilliant smile towards Ainz instantly. Their complicated expression was gone; they changed back into two cute and pure girls who are in love. *Women are scary… No, these two must be special…* After turning into an undead, any strong emotion Ainz feels will be suppressed. Even Ainz who was like this felt their face changes at an incredible pace.

They are so incompatible because they were love rivals. Albedo and Shalltear fell for Ainz at the same time. Any man would be happy to be adored by such beautiful ladies. But Ainz was unable to accept this wholeheartedly. Because Shalltear who was into necrophilia whispered softly into Ainz's ear in a sweet tone: "Such wonderful skeletal shape, a masterpiece by the creators."

This might be sweet murmurs of love for Shalltear, or it could just be praising the looks of Ainz. But Ainz was shocked that the first time he was complimented for his looks, it was for his bones. That was his memory from a few days ago. Ainz purged this insignificant matter out of his mind and said: "I will ask again. Shalltear, do you have something for me?"

"Yes. By your command, I am planning to meet Cocytus later. I might not be able to return to Nazarick for a period of time, so I came to bid you farewell." Ainz remembers the instruction he gave Shalltear and nodded: "I understand. Shalltear, be careful in your mission and return safely."

"Yes!" Shalltear replied in a stern and solemn tone. "You may leave Shalltear. When you leave, tell Narberal or Entoma to summon Demiurge over. Tell him I want to discuss my next plan with him."

"Understood, Ainz-sama."

第一章 兩個冒險者

Chapter 1: The Two Adventurers, Part 1

The Kingdom’s city of E-Rantel was situated at the border between the Baharuth Empire and the Slane Theocracy. Since it was protected by 3 layers of city walls, it was known as the Fortress City due to its appearance. The zones between each layer had their own unique characteristics. The outermost walls were used by the Kingdom's military and had all the necessary military armaments.

The innermost wall housed the administrative zone. This zone has its own warehouses for food, and was heavily protected by soldiers. The zone in between these two areas was the residential area for civilians. When you hear the word city, this was the zone that matched it. Of the several plazas within this zone, the biggest one was called the central plaza.

Lots of people set up shop there, laying out all sorts of vegetables, spices and other sorts of merchandise. In the lively crowd, a shop owner shouted loudly in an attempt to attract customers. Elderly housewives and merchants haggled over the price of fresh ingredients, youths are being enticed by the fragrance of juicy, barbecued meat kebabs.

This plaza was incredibly lively in the day, the noisy and crowded atmosphere would carry on till sunset. But two figures leaving a five-story building put an end to the rowdy atmosphere. Every eye in the plaza was drawn to the duo as they stood motionlessly. One of them was a female between fifteen and twenty years old.

The corners of her eyes were sharp and shone with the brilliance of obsidian. Her thick, shiny black hair was tied up in a ponytail and her snow-white skin glittered in the sun like pearls. Her most prominent part was her elegant air and her exotic beauty that would make anybody look twice. The brown cloak she wore was plain, but on her it looked like a lavish gown.

Her partner was of an indeterminable gender, since there were simply no visible signs to determine it. Some people in the plaza mumbled: “Dark warrior.” That's right, that person was wearing an elegant full body armor decorated with purple and golden markings. The face couldn’t be seen through the thin slit in the helmet. Under the red cape on his back, two large swords could be seen, complementing the style of dressing. The two of them looked around and the armored figure took the first steps.

The crowd started to murmur as they watched the back of the two figures fade into the distance. They were surprised by the rare sight they just saw and felt no fear or wariness towards the armed duo. The reason for that was that the duo exited from the building known as the Adventurer's Guild, an association for experts who hunted monsters. Other armed people also left the building as well after the two left. The observant people had also noticed small copper medals hanging on their necks.

The duo only attracted attention because of the lady's beauty and the strikingly cool armor. They walked silently on the narrow road. The water pooled in the tracks of carriages reflected the sun. The road itself was made from sand and mud, thus meaning that it was not as good as those paved with stone and was hard to walk on. It was easy to slip and fall, but the pair’s balance was

excellent and their walking speed was almost the same as if they were walking on a stone paved road. The fleet-footed lady confirmed nobody was around and said to fully armored person next to her: “Ainz-sa—”

“No, my name is Momon. And you are not the battlemaid Narberal from the Great Tomb of Nazarick, but Momon's adventuring partner Nabe.” The fully armored person, Ainz, interrupted the girl named Narberal and she responded: “Ah! My humble apologies, Momon-sama.”

“Don't address me as -sama. We are normal adventurers and comrades. It would be weird for you to add –sama.”

“B-But! How could I be so impudent towards you, the Supreme Ruler?”

Ainz stopped the agitated sounding Narberal with a hand gesture, signaling her to lower her voice. Then he replied with a hint of resignation and helplessness: “I’ve repeated this many times already; Here, I am the Dark Warrior Momon… No, just your partner Momon, so don't address me as -sama. That’s an order.” After a moment of silence, Narberal answered reluctantly: “Understood Momon-sa–san.”

“Never mind, this will have to do, there is no need to add honorifics though. If you add honorifics when addressing comrades… How should I put this… Others will think we aren't close.”

“But… That would be too disrespectful…”

Ainz shrugged at the stammering Narberal: “We can't reveal our real identities. You do understand that part, right?”

“You are absolutely right.”

“…Your tone… Well, never mind. Anyway… What I want to say is that you must be careful in everything you say or do.”

“…Understood, Momon-sa–san. But is it really fine for me to accompany you? Wouldn't someone as beautiful and gentle like Albedo-sama be more suitable?”

“Albedo, huh…”

Ainz’s following words were full of complicated feelings. “She needs to manage Nazarick while I am away.”

“Pardon my impudence, but you can leave the management of Nazarick to Cocytus-sama. All the Guardians feel the same… Taking your safety into consideration, wouldn’t the best Guardian, Albedo-sama, be the best choice?” Ainz smiled awkwardly at Narberal's query.

When he expressed his wish to head for E-Rantel, Albedo was the one who objected the most. After all, she knew she wouldn't be able to tag along. Shortly after he was transported into this world, Ainz went outside while leaving his escorts behind and Albedo blamed herself for being incompetent.

Therefore, Ainz was unable to strongly oppose her opinion. But this time was different since it was done after a lot of careful planning, so he wouldn't back down. His opposition consisted of Guardians who'd obediently listened to 'orders', even if it went against their will. But Ainz didn't think that was a good thing. He felt guilty forcefully imposing his will on the Guardians created by his guild mates.

Ainz who tried to convince them and Albedo who was adamantly opposing. They had no middle ground and were fated to never reach a consensus. But Demiurge whispered something into Albedo's ears, and she suddenly stopped her resistance. She even bid Ainz farewell with a smile of approval. Ainz still didn't know what Demiurge said to her and he felt uneasy at how Albedo changed her stance so drastically. "…I didn't bring her along because there was no one I trust more than her. I can leave Nazarick without worries because she is there."

"Just as I thought! This means that Albedo-sama is the one closest to Momon-sa–san right?" Although he did not acknowledge it verbally, but Ainz nodded in answer to Narberal's question. "I am aware of the danger." Ainz lifted his right gauntlet and indicated his ring finger: "But I need to do this personally. Just giving commands from within Nazarick will lead to making mistakes in this unknown world. There is a need to go outside and experience this world myself… Maybe there are better methods to accomplish this, but I feel uneasy with so many unknowns." He answered solemnly through the gap in his helmet.

As Narberal answered "I get it now." and made an enlightened expression, Ainz asked her with a bit of uneasiness: "I have a question for you… Do you believe humans are low-class creatures?"

"That's right, humans are worthless scum." answered Narberal from the bottom of her heart without the slightest hesitation. Ainz mumbled softly "Ah, so you feel the same way", but since his volume was too low Narberal didn't hear him. He continued to rant: "That's what her personality is like, that's why I didn't want to enter a human city. I should understand the character of my subordinates first."

That was one of the reasons he didn't take Albedo along. She was absolutely convinced humans were low-class creatures. If Ainz brought someone like her into a city full of people, it could only end in a blood bath if he slipped up; it was nothing to joke about. Another reason was Albedo's inability to disguise herself, she was unable to hide her horns and wings.

And then there was the main reason, which he couldn't say out loud. A mere salary man like Ainz didn't have the confidence to run an organization just by reading the reports of others. That was why he dumped the heavy responsibility of running Nazarick to the talented Albedo. If a subordinate was excellent, giving to the said subordinate free reign would be the best decision. Inept supervisors who butted in needlessly would only cause a tragedy. And Albedo was bound tightly with the dual locks of 'loyalty' and 'love'. That was the reason Ainz could leave the Great Tomb of Nazarick in her hands.

Love, huh… Whenever Ainz saw Albedo or heard her express her love for him, Ainz would be reminded of how he carelessly edited Albedo's setting. When the server was about to shut down, Ainz modified Albedo's 'character setting' to be deeply in love with Momonga, who was Ainz. Back then he didn't know he would be transported into this unknown, alternate world, he only intended to pull a little joke at the very end.

A person like him. Thinking deeper about it, even if Albedo didn't mind, what would his friend Tabula Smaragdina think if he knew what Ainz had done? And how would he feel about this? To have the NPC he created rewritten by a friend… He was taking advantage of that, using the fact that Albedo wouldn't betray him. He hated himself for this. Ainz shook his head to get rid of his negative thoughts. All of his strong emotions became suppressed after he turned into an undead, but he could feel emotions of this level as if he was still a human.

If his mind really became that of an undead, he wouldn't have to feel such a sense of guilt anymore. Distracted by such thoughts, Ainz turned his helmet towards Narberal: "…Nabe, I won't ask you to stop thinking like that, but you have to suppress it. This is a human city and we have no idea what kind of powerful people we might meet, so don't attract unnecessary attention from the enemy with such thoughts."

Narberal bowed deeply to express her fealty towards Ainz, but he reached out to her, lifted her face and warned: "One more thing, I am not sure if humans will feel threatened… By our killing intent when we want to fight or are in the midst of battle. But it appears that we do emit such an aura. So don't act recklessly without my permission, understand?"

"Understood Momon-sa–san."

"Very good… The tavern that was scouted beforehand should be in the vicinity."

Ainz looked around him. There were several shops open for business, with a handful of visiting customers. To the side were a few workmen in work aprons carrying goods. They searched for the tavern in this shop-populated zone by matching the pattern of the drawing in Ainz's hand with the pattern of the signboard. Since Ainz and Narberal couldn't read the language of this country they had to resort to this.

Shortly after, they found the target 'pattern'. Ainz sped up unconsciously and Narberal followed. Dusting the dirt off his armored boots, Ainz walked up 2 steps, opened the double doors with both hands and entered. Almost all the windows were closed, giving the indoors dim lighting. Those who were used to the bright light outside wouldn't be able to adjust immediately. But for Ainz, who had night vision, this amount of light was more than enough.

The interior was spacious; the first floor was the dining area with a counter. Two cabinets were placed behind the counter, with a few dozen wine bottles on it. The door next to the counter probably led into the kitchen. At the corner of the dining area was a right angled stairway leading to the 2nd floor. According to the counter lady, the 2nd and 3rd floor were guestrooms. A handful of patrons were scattered around some of the round dining tables. Most of them were men and the atmosphere felt hostile.

Everyone was looking at Ainz and they seemed to be taking his measure. The only one who ignored Ainz was a woman sitting in a corner who was staring at a bottle on her table. This scene in the tavern caused Ainz to raise his non-existent brows under his helmet. He had mentally prepared himself for this, but it was still filthier than he thought.

In Yggdrasil, there were many dirty and disgusting places and even the Great Tomb of Nazarick had one of them. Examples would be the hall of the Lord of Terror or the giant cavern of poison

worms. But this filth was different. There were scraps of food all over the floor and unknown liquids; weird stains on the wall; a mysterious cube-shaped item molding in a corner…

Ainz sighed in his heart and looked around the tavern. There was a man with a dirty scarf around his neck, with his sleeved rolled up to show off two muscular arms. There were several scars that were either from a beast's claw or a blade wound. His looks were somewhere between a brute and a beast, scars could clearly be seen on his face and his head was shaved. He looked more like a bouncer than the owner, holding a rag while observing Ainz openly.

“Looking for a room? How many nights?” he asked from across the room with a voice that sounded like a broken bell. “We want to stay for one night.” The boss answered crudely: “…Copper medal. Communal hall will be 5 copper coins per night. Oatmeal with vegetables will be complementary, one more copper if you want meat. The oatmeal might be replaced with bread several days old.”

“If possible, I would like a double room.”

The owner snorted: “…There are 3 taverns used exclusively by adventurers and mine is the worst of the lot… Do you know why the people at the guild introduce this place to you?”

“I don't know, please enlighten me.” In response to Ainz's query, the owner raised his brow and showed his intimidating side: “Use your brain! Or is the inside of this flashy helmet empty?”

Even after hearing the impatient and loud voice of the owner, Ainz remained unmoved. He calmly dismissed it and treated it like a children's tantrum because of the battle several days ago. After that battle, and the intelligence he got from the prisoners, Ainz understood just how powerful he was. That was why he didn't get agitated after being shouted at.

The owner was a bit surprised by Ainz's reaction: “…You have guts… Most of the adventurers staying here have copper or iron medals. Even if you meet someone for the first time, you can form an adventuring party if your abilities are around the same level. That's why my place is best suited for you to find teammates matching your current abilities…”

The owner's eyes flashed for a moment: “You can sleep in a room if you want, but you won't get teammates without using the common grounds. If you can't form a balanced party, you will be dead if you fight monsters. Rookies without comrades will advertise themselves in a crowded place like this. I will ask for the last time; you want the communal hall or a double room?”

“Double room. I will pass on the meal.”

“Tch, brushing off my good will… Or do you think you are something special and your flashy full body armor isn’t just for show? Never mind, one night will be 7 copper coins. Payment in advance, of course.”

The owner promptly held out his hand. Under everyone’s judging eyes, Ainz started walking towards him with Narberal following behind… When suddenly a foot was stuck out to block Ainz's path. Ainz stopped, only moving his gaze to the man who was sticking his foot out. The man showed an annoying smirk. The other men at the table did the same, staring at either Ainz or Narberal. The owner and the other customers kept quiet and didn’t interfere. Everyone appeared

to be indifferent, but they were actually expecting to see a good show, with some of them watching the whole scene closely.

Well, well… Ainz sighed softly in irritation and gently kicked the foot away. The man seemed to be waiting for this action and stood up. Because he wasn't wearing armor, the bulging muscles under his shirt were easily visible. A necklace hung around his neck, swaying with his every move. It was similar to the one Ainz wore, but this one was made of iron instead of copper…

"Hey hey, that hurts." The man threatened Ainz with a sharp voice and approached him slowly. He was wearing his gauntlets when he stood up and the metal parts squeaked as he clenched his fist. The man was just as big as Ainz and they stood a bit too close for a brawl as they glared at each other. Ainz flamed the fight on: "I see. My field of vision is rather bad because of my helmet, so I didn't see your leg in front of me. Or maybe I didn't notice your leg because it was too short… That's my reason, would you forgive me please?"

"…Bastard."

Ainz's taunt made the man glare dangerously, but when he turned his gaze to look at Narberal who was standing behind Ainz, his gaze stuck onto her: "You are an annoying fellow… But I am a generous man. I'll forgive you if you lend me that woman for one night."

"Ke, kekeke." Ainz laughed coldly, holding back Narberal who wanted to confront the man. "…What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing, it's just that you said a classic line befitting a mob villain, which made me laugh, don't worry about it."

"Huh?" The man's face turned red from anger.

"Oh, before we start I wanted to ask: Are you stronger than Gazef Stronoff?"

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"I see; I can tell from your reaction. I don't even need to use my strength to play with you… Fly."

Ainz grabbed the man's chest and lifted him up in an instant. The man couldn't dodge or resist, shouting 'Whoa!' in surprise. The men watching the scene got rowdy. Just how powerful was his arm strength if he could lift a full grown man? Everyone present could imagine how powerful he had to be in order to do that. The man's legs kicked vainly as a wave of shouts and gasps came from the crowd.

Ainz gently tossed him away. But 'gently' was relative when it came to Ainz. The man nearly hit the ceiling as he flew in an arc and heavily hit the ground. The sound of bodies colliding, something on the table shattering, wood cracking and the man's painful howl reverberated within the hall. The tavern was silent as if they were shocked by the moans. But—

"Hya—!" The woman seated at the table screamed a beat too slow. It was a scream as if a catastrophe fell from the sky. No, it was normal to scream like that if a man suddenly fell from the sky, but something other than surprise was mixed in that scream. "…So, what do you guys want to do? Can you come at me together to save me some trouble? Wasting time on this is stupid."

Ainz taunted the men who shared table with the troublemaker, and his companions understood the meaning behind these words and lowered their heads: “Ah? Ehh! Our friend has offended you! We are very sorry about that!”

“…Okay, I’ll forgive you. It didn’t trouble me too much, but make sure to compensate the owner for the table.”

“Definitely. We will compensate the full sum.”

When Ainz felt this matter was settled and was planning to leave, someone stopped him: “Hey, hey, hey!” He turned and saw the woman who had screamed miserably approaching him unceremoniously. She was about 20 years old or younger, her messy hair trimmed short for easy movement. No matter how you put it, her hair was untidy. Frankly speaking, it looked like a bird-nest.

Her features weren’t bad, her eyes were sharp, she didn’t wear makeup and her skin was wheat colored after long exposure to the sun. Her arms had solid muscles and her hand was full of calluses from wielding a sword. The first impression that came to mind wasn’t ‘woman’ but ‘warrior’. A necklace with an iron medal hung above her chest, swaying violently as she walked.

“Look at what you have done!”

“What is the matter?”

“Huh? You don’t even know what you did?” The woman pointed to the broken table. “Because you threw that man there, my potion, my precious potion broke!”

“It is just a potion…”

“…I didn’t even eat in order to save the money for it. I just bought that potion today, but you broke it! No matter how dangerous an adventure is, that potion would’ve kept me safe. But you have shattered this pious hope of mine and still show me such an attitude? This is infuriating.”

The woman took another step closer to Ainz. Standing before him was a raging bull, glaring at him with bloodshot eyes. Ainz held back his sigh. It was his fault for tossing the man without thinking about where he would land, but Ainz had his reasons as well, so he wouldn’t compensate her so easily: “…How about getting your money from that man? If he didn’t stretch out his short leg, this tragedy wouldn’t have happened, isn’t that right?”

Ainz glared at that man’s companion through his slit visor. “Ah, that’s true…”

“But…”

“Never mind, it doesn’t matter who, just compensate me for the potion… The price was 1 gold and 10 silver coins.” The men lowered their heads; it didn’t look like they were able to pay the money. Thus the woman looked at Ainz again: “As expected. Of course they won't have any money, considering the way they're drinking. With such a flashy armor, you must have some potions, right?”

Ainz understood why the woman was asking him for compensation. This was a rather difficult case. After thinking for a while, Ainz braced himself and asked: “I do have some… But that was recovery potion correct?”

“That’s right. I worked for every drop—”

“Yes, yes, you don’t need to say it. I’ll compensate you with a potion and settle the issue.” Ainz took out a low-grade potion and gave it to the woman. The woman looked at the potion with a strange expression and received it reluctantly.

“…Are we even now?”

“Yeah, everything is good.” The woman sounded like she had something to say, but Ainz ignored the doubt in his heart. More importantly, he was worried about Narberal starting a big ruckus. Even with Ainz warning her, Narberal eyes still looked sharp. A few people felt uneasy after sensing her murderous looks. “Let’s go.” Ainz told Narberal with a tone signaling restraint and went to the tavern owner.

He took out a leather purse, picked up a silver coin and placed it in the owner’s rough hand. The owner silently put the silver into his pocket and grabbed a few copper coins. “Here are 6 copper coins as change.” He put the copper coins in Ainz gauntlet wearing hand and placed a small key on the counter: “The first room on the right, up the stairs, you can store your luggage in the chest behind the bed. You don’t need me to remind you not to approach the rooms of others carelessly. It would be troublesome if a misunderstanding occurs, but that’s not a bad way to get others to know you. You look like you can handle any situation, just don’t give me any trouble.”

The owner glanced at the man moaning on the floor. “I understand. Please prepare the minimum necessary equipment for adventurers. We lost our stuff and the Guild told us you would prepare them for your customers if we asked.” The owner looked at Ainz and Narberal’s dressing and stared at Ainz’s leather purse: “Yeah, got it. I will prepare it before dinner. You need to ready your money too.”

“Sure. Nabe, we are leaving.”

Ainz climbed up the old, creaking staircase with Narberal and headed towards his room. After Ainz’s figure disappeared onto the second floor, the companions of the man thrown by Ainz hastily cast a healing spell on him. Their action was like lighting a fuse, and the tavern became rowdy again.

“…Seems he is as tough as he looks.”

“Definitely. That arm strength is too powerful; how did he train to reach that level?”

“No weapons other than the two big swords on his back, he must be confident.”

“Why did this have to happen again… Now there’s another person who’ll surpass us immediately!” The conversations were filled with sighs, surprise and fear. Everyone knew from the beginning Ainz wasn’t a normal adventurer. The first clue was his flashy equipment.

Full body armor wasn't cheap, only those who kept adventuring and had plenty of experience could afford them. Only those who had advanced to Silver rank could accumulate such wealth with the remunerations of their missions. But there were still some who inherited or picked it up from the battlefield or dungeons.

That was the reason they wanted to know his actual power. Everyone was a companion and a competitor at the same time. They all wanted to know the capability of the newcomers, so the process just now kept on repeating. All who were present went through the same ritual. But no one had passed through the rites so easily. That meant the duo wearing the copper medal… Be it companions or competitors, they were definitely powerful, that was evident to anyone who watched them.

"How should we deal with these two?"

"We can't flirt with that beauty anymore."

"But if there are only two of them, they can join our team."

"You got it wrong; we should be the ones asking them to join their party."

"I wonder what he looks like under that helmet."

"I will eavesdrop from the neighboring room of that guy tonight."

"He mentioned Gazef Stronoff, the strongest warrior among the neighboring nations just now right? Could he be the disciple of the Warrior-Captain?"

"That is possible. Let me take on this heavy responsibility with my good hearing (thief ears)".

As the crowd noisily discussed the mysterious duo in high spirit, the tavern owner walked towards one adventurer. It was the woman who got the potion from Ainz. The woman, Britta shifted her gaze from the red potion she was staring at intensely and looked at the owner with a dull expression. "What potion is that?"

"Who knows?"

"…Hey, you don't even know? Didn't you accept his compensation immediately because you knew the price of this potion?"

"That's impossible, I've never seen such a potion before. Didn't you come here to take a look as well because you haven't seen this before, old man?"

Britta guessed right. "Can this potion really compensate you? Your potion breaking is a fact, right? This one might be cheaper than the one you bought."

"That might be… This is a gamble, but I am confident I'll come out ahead. This was given to me by a guy in flashy armor after hearing the value of my potion."

"I see…"

"…I have never seen a recovery potion with such a strange color; it might be a rare item. If I hesitated back then and asked to be paid with money instead, it would be the same as leaving the tiger's den empty-handed. I'll get it appraised tomorrow and find out how much it is worth."

"Oh, I will foot the appraisal fee. Not just that, I will even recommend a good place for you."

"Old man?" Britta frowned.

The tavern owner wasn't a bad guy, but he was definitely not a charitable man. There must be a catch. "Hey, don't give me that look. I just want you to tell me the effects of your potion."

"Is that what you were planning?"

"It's a great deal right? And with my connections, I can introduce you to the best pharmacist, that Lizzie Bareare." Britta was shocked. Many mercenaries and adventurers congregated in E-Rantel, so vendors specializing in weapons and equipment were able to earn a lot of money, with the recovery potion trade being the most profitable.

That's why E-Rantel had more pharmacists than other cities. But even in the face of so much competition, Lizzie Bareare held on to her title as the best pharmacist. Among all the pharmacists in the city, she could concoct the greatest amount of complicated potions. Since the owner mentioned Lizzie Bareare, Britta couldn't refuse.

Chapter 1: The Two Adventurers, Part 2

The wooden door closed with a creaking sound. Aside from a small table and two single wooden beds with attached chests, there was no other furniture. Sun and fresh air were available by opening the blinds. Ainz looked around the room and was disappointed. He didn't expect a tavern from the countryside to have the facilities and cleanliness of Nazarick, but he was still put off by this.

“How dare they assign such quarters to Momon-sama.”

“Don't say that Nabe. Our objective in this city is to become adventurers and get famous. Before that, it will be a good experience to live in a way that befits our current status.” He didn't mention the displeasure in his heart as he consoled Narberal while closing the blinds. The sunlight leaking through the gaps of the blinds wasn’t enough to illuminate the whole room. Ainz and Narberal were fine since the both of them had night vision, but for normal people this room was too dark.

“Being an adventurer… This job isn’t as fantastic as I imagined.” Adventurers. Ainz had some fantasies about them. People who sought out the unknown, venturing around the world. Ainz had certain expectations of this career that embodied the right way of playing the game Yggdrasil. But after listening to the explanation of the counter lady, he learned that adventuring was a practical and dull career.

In short, adventurers were 'mercenaries who deal with monsters'. Some parts were similar to Ainz's idealized version of adventurers. They do explore the ruins of countries destroyed by Demon Gods, and do seek unknown treasures in secret realms; but they are basically monster hunters.

All monsters had unique abilities, so there was a need for people with a wide variety of skills to handle them. Thinking about it from this angle, there really might be heroes that were needed by the people, who showed up as if they were clichés in a game. But reality was different. The governing organizations disliked the existence of armed groups outside their control. Even setting financial concerns aside, the social status of adventurers was still low.

There were other reasons why countries didn't take in adventurers en masse. Instead of hiring permanent staff with high salaries, it was better to outsource the work to local adventurer guilds, which made more sense as a business. For companies that can operate without the adventurers’ guild or a nation that can clear monsters with their military, the status of adventurers was even lower.

According to the complaints of the counter lady, there were no adventurers in the Slane Theocracy. The status of adventurers in the Baharuth Empire became even worse after the current Emperor ascended the throne. Ainz purged the slight feelings of disappointment from his heart. Getting the job you wanted and realizing reality was different from your imagination was a common occurrence.

As Ainz waved his hand gently, his dark full body armor and the 2 giant swords on his back disappeared without a trace, revealing his skeletal body under the magic equipment. A red reticule flickered on top of his grey goggles. His headpiece was covered in thorns and decorated with amethysts. He was wearing a silky, black, long-sleeved shirt and baggy pants. The belt around the pants waist was a simple, black band.

After removing his plain steel gauntlets, a ring could be seen on every single bony finger, except for the ring finger on one hand. His brown leather boots with rough exterior were adorned with gold embroidery. Hanging on his neck was a silver disc with a drawing of a lion. A red cape was draped over his shoulders.

The equipment of Yggdrasil was normally installed using an external crystal drive, so it was hard to standardize the looks of equipment. But since a lot of players hated wearing mixed pieces of equipment, it was resolved in one of the version updates. It added the option to standardize the appearance of equipment without affecting its stats. The black armor that covered Ainz's whole body had several requirements and possessing the ability 'High Level Item Creation' was one of them.

Right now, Ainz was equipped with 'Sure Hit Glasses', 'Crown of Mental Barriers', 'Clothes of the Black Widow', 'Black Belt', 'Metallic Gauntlets', 'Nemean Lion' and 'Boots of Speed'. Item trading in Yggdrasil was usually done via computer crystal data transfer, but for the sake of creating more powerful equipment, there were people who bought second hand items. A problem might arise if an item was created by another person and the name of the item included words that were banned on a server or insulted specific persons.

The mods might request the name to be amended, but the items were usually named as the creator pleased. A weird name wouldn't be popular when you attempt to sell it. The fee for renaming wasn't expensive, but few people would want to purchase an item and rename it later. So every player gave their all in naming their equipment. The name might originate from mythology or the English language. And of course, there were exceptions too.

It was a hassle to name rings, so calling them ring1, ring2, ring3 wasn't too bad. Ainz even saw people naming thumb ring, index finger ring and middle finger ring. Ainz's friend Takemikazuchi used two tachis if the situation warranted it. He named the 8th generation of one of the tachi as 'Takemikazuchi Mk 8'. It was the same for naming this red cape. Because he copied the dark hero of an American comic, it was named Spawn Cape.

These were all Relic class equipment. Compared to Ainz main gear it was 2 classes lower, but bringing equipment that was too powerful might cause problems, so he decided to bring only equipment of this class. As Ainz stretched his shoulder to enjoy the feeling of liberty after taking the armor off, Narberal choose this moment to ask: "Speaking of which, how should we dispose of that annoying wench?"

"Ahh, you mean the woman whose potion was smashed? No need to bother with her. If something important to me was broken by others, I might've lost my cool as well…" Since his mentality changed after turning into this body, Ainz stopped momentarily and continued: "…Probably. Criticizing me for being careless is only natural."

“But the only one to blame is that stupid human who sought trouble with the Supreme Ruler, if it weren’t for him, nothing would’ve happened.”

“That might be so, but since I was the one who tossed him, I will generously forgive her this time. And what we are trying to achieve in this city is to become part of this world and raise the fame of Momon and Nabe. It would tarnish our names if others learned we couldn't even pay for a bottle of potion.”

Although she looked unsatisfied, Narberal still nodded her understanding. “And since they’re our seniors, juniors like us need to let her save face.” Ainz said while he toyed with the chain on his neck, trying to avoid touching the Nemean Lion. *…If only it was possible to create a forgery of this medal… But it might cause trouble with the Adventurer’s Guild.*

Attached to the chain was a copper medal which served as his identification plate. This plate could be used to judge an adventurer’s ability. Copper, iron, silver, gold, platinum, mithril, orichalcum and adamantite. These metals are used to rank adventurers, with copper being the lowest and adamantite the highest rank.

Higher ranking adventurers can choose harder jobs which offer greater rewards. This system was established to prevent adventurers from losing their life in vain. Since he recently registered as an adventurer, Ainz only has a copper medal that are assigned to beginners, while that woman had an iron medal. Showing respect for seniors was a trick for smooth sailing in society.

“But Ainz-sama, I don't believe a soft metal like adamantite suits you. Maybe soul emeralds, gold rubies or one of the other rainbow metals would be more suitable. These plebeians can't appreciate greatness.”

Narberal casually mentioned the highest classes of metals in Yggdrasil. Ainz looked at her sharply and reminded her: “Narberal, to be safe, address me as Momon in this city.”

“By your command! Momon-sama!”

“Do you want me to repeat my warning? Call me Momon.”

“I, I am very sorry! Momon-sa–san.”

“…Momon-sasan sounds a bit silly, doesn’t it? Never mind, if addressing me as Momon is too hard, at least call me Momon-san. Understand?”

“Understood, Momon-san.”

Narberal bowed deeply once again as Ainz facepalmed himself. *She still doesn’t get why I want her to address me as Momon-san. A useless fellow… Forget it, there was no other choice. Just let it go.* “I will explain the plan henceforth.”

“Yes!”

Narberal went down on one knee and lowered her head, it was the posture of a servant awaiting her master's command. Ainz was troubled about what to do. It should fine since they closed the door entering the room, but people would surely gossip if they saw such a scene. *Just… Why can’t*

she understand the reason I insist on her addressing me as Momon? I explained it to her before we arrived at the tavern…

Ainz explained half-resigned: "We are going to disguise ourselves as adventurers in this city. One reason is to collect intelligence on the adventurers of this world, among which should be powerful people, with emphasis on Yggdrasil players like me. If we can obtain high-ranking identification medals, we can take on official jobs and the intelligence we can get will be more helpful and reliable. So our first step is to become successful adventurers."

After Narberal expressed her understanding, Ainz briefed her on the task at hand. "But there's a problem." Ainz took out the leather purse and opened it, pouring its contents onto his hand. Only a few coins appeared and they were definitely not shiny. "We have no money." During the dispute earlier, Ainz had several reasons for recompensing her with a potion, and one of them was his lack of confidence in resolving the issue with money. It would've been awkward if he claimed to have no money back then.

Ainz explained to the baffled Narberal: "No, we do have money, but the only currency I own are the gold coins of Yggdrasil and I want to use these gold coins only as a last resort."

"Why is that? Didn't we confirm Yggdrasil coins have monetary value here?"

"Indeed, at Carne village we learned that one Yggdrasil gold coin… Er, the gold used in trading is known as common gold, and one Yggdrasil coin is worth two common gold coins. But if we use Yggdrasil gold coins in this city, we won't know where it might end up. We could alert any number of people and if there are any Yggdrasil players out there, it would be like announcing our presence. This has to be avoided until we fully understand this world."

"Players… People on the same level as Ainz-sama, the villains that attacked Nazarick in the past."

Ainz frowned at the way she addressed him, but he didn't say anything because of the same reason as before. "That's right, they are people we can't take lightly." He, Ainz Ooal Gown, reached level 100, the level cap in Yggdrasil. It wasn't uncommon for players to reach the level cap. Or rather, most of the players were level 100. Among these players, Ainz thought himself to be in the middle of the upper tier.

This was because in game, Ainz focused on grinding jobs that fit the undead and magic casters, neglecting to improve his fighting prowess. Taking his Divine class equipment and pay-to-win items into account, he should be in the mid-upper tier, but he shouldn't forget there were always stronger people out there.

He had to avoid detection by other players. There were many opponents Ainz couldn't beat in a fight. Players were originally human, so most of them will help the humans in this world. If these kinds of players faced off against Albedo and the others who considered humans as lowly scum, the Great Tomb of Nazarick and everyone in Ainz Ooal Gown would become the enemy of humanity. That was the reason he thought bringing Albedo along was dangerous.

But I had no idea Narberal thought the same way. Even though Ainz wasn't hostile towards humans, he wouldn't hesitate to kill them if it allowed him to reach his goal, but he would rather avoid clashing with other players "Looking at it this way, it was a pity."

“What is a pity?”

“Losing that man called Nigan so easily. He could’ve been a treasure trove of information, but I ended him casually after asking a few simple questions.”

A few dozen members of the Sunlight Scripture were captured at Carne village. Some of them died during the process of questioning them and were used as material for Ainz's special ability to summon undead. Recalling the intelligence they got from the interrogation, Ainz couldn't help mocking himself: “Normal players… Will likely support the Slane Theocracy.”

The Slane Theocracy was a religious nation, worshipping the Six Great Gods that descended six centuries ago. According to the Sunlight Scripture, the Slane Theocracy existed in order to enable the weak human race to defeat the other, stronger races, which would allow humanity to grow strong and prosper.

Any players who retained their humanity would definitely agree with the teachings of Slane Theocracy, a nation that worked hard towards this goal. In contrast to the real world where humanity reigned supreme, they were considered as one of the weakest races in this one. Humans built grand cities on the plains, but just living there highlighted how fragile humanity was.

The open plains were a dangerous terrain. Their enemies were able to easily spot them due to the lack of places to hide in. The reason they had to settle for such a place was their lack of night vision, leg strength and stamina. Since humans were a weak race, they would’ve never been able to build their own society nor civilization had they chosen to live in another place.

Lots of races were stronger or had a more advanced civilization than humans, but these races didn't dominate the land. They fought against the Eight Kings of Greed who attempted to rule over the world, allowing humanity to survive the war. If it wasn’t for this, humanity would have already been eliminated. It was normal wanting to help humanity in such a world, and that was the reason Ainz didn't want anything to do with the Slane Theocracy, remaining wary of players.

“About the money, I plan to sell the swords of the Slane soldiers who disguised themselves as knights… But before that, we need to find work.”

“Understood. So we are going back to the guild tomorrow.”

“That's right. I wanted to tour the city and learn more about it, but that can wait until we earned some money.”

“Understood. As one of the battlemaids, I will offer my full support.”

“I see. I will be relying on you, Narberal.” Ainz was pleased with Narberal, who bowed deeply. He activated his magic, casting his illusion and armor again. “I will scout the surroundings, remain on standby here.”

“Allow me to escort you!”

“No need, I am just looking around the near vicinity. If possible, I want to visit the rumored vast cemetery… I’m leaving you here to prevent others from trespassing. Don't let down your guard and stay alert. We shouldn't have made any mistakes, but this is enemy territory, so be vigilant.”

“By your command.”

“I will leave the periodic report to you.”

Narberal let out a deep sigh after Ainz left the room. She then massaged the corner of her eyes, her sharp eyes drooping down weakly, she looked exhausted. Even her pony tail looked flaccid and lifeless. But she still remembered the orders of her esteemed master. Narberal concentrated intensely, trying to learn more about the situation outside, but as a magic caster she lacked the craftiness of thieves. To make up for it, she used one of the skills she was proficient in.

“「Rabbit Ears」.” With the activation of the spell, a pair of cute rabbit ears sprouted from the top of Narberal's head. The ears trembled as they listened to the sounds around her. This was one of the three rabbit spells, which were dubbed ‘rabbit magic’ by Yggdrasil players.

The others spells were called ‘Rabbit’s Foot’, which increased the luck stat, and ‘Rabbit Tail’, which slightly decreased enemy aggression towards the caster. The appearance of female characters would change if all three were activated at the same time, making this magic very popular. But since there was no need for the other two spells, Narberal didn't use them.

Most of Narberal's magic belonged to the combat variation, but this was one of the few exceptions. After listening to her surroundings and making sure it was safe, she activated the ‘Message’ spell. Immediately, a sweet, female voice could be heard in Narberal's head. It was as if her call had been expected.

『Narberal Gamma, you have something to report to me?』

“Yes, it's the periodic report.”

Right now, Narberal was talking to the Overseer of the Great Tomb of Nazarick, Albedo. After reporting everything, Narberal finally talked about things the other party wanted to hear. “Ainz-sama mentioned Albedo-sama, saying that 'other than her, there was no one else he trusted this much'.”

『Fuhu—!』 A weird scream of excitement ringed in Narberal's mind. 『Very good~, very good~, Narberal is a good girl! Carry on advertising for me like this! This is an order from the Nazarick's Overseer!』

Question marks appeared on top of Narberal's head, who thought: Is something like this worth issuing an order? Thinking about it calmly, this was a contest that would determine who would serve the Overlord. That way, an order like this was completely natural. While Narberal was pondering this, Albedo’s excited voice could be heard again: 『With Shalltear out on a mission, I will use this chance to leisurely bridge the distance between me and Ainz-sama! It might be a difficult fort to conquer, but by attacking in waves it will eventually fall after taking a beachhead! When that glorious day comes, Shalltear will shed tears of regret!』

Albedo's gleeful shouting made Narberal frown. Even Narberal was getting annoyed listening to such agitated noises. With a cheerful voice and skipping steps, Albedo droned on about what she planned to do next time and how things should be. She suddenly asked calmly: 『Why are all of you helping me? What is the reason you chose me over Shalltear? Is there something you want?』

“This is a simple question. If you ask me who is more suited to be seated next to Ainz-sama, Shalltear-sama or Albedo-sama, I will definitely answer Albedo-sama.”

『Fuhu—! Fantastic. I didn't expect you to be someone who thinks about the future of Nazarick, impressive.』

“And Yuri-nee is not good in dealing with Shalltear-sama.”

『Oh, Yuri Alpha. I see… That’s true. Are the others on my team too?』

Not just vice-captain Yuri Alpha, the rest of her comrades popped into Narberal's mind as well: “That’s uncertain. Lupusregina is on Albedo-sama's team, but Solution is on Shalltear's side. Entoma and Shizu are unknown, probably sitting on the fence.”

『Is there any way to recruit Solution?』

“That would be very difficult, since her interests are similar to Shalltear-sama’s.”

『Oh I see… What a low class hobby.』

Narberal agreed with Albedo, unable to understand Solution Epsilon's interests and tilted her head. Except for one, all humans were lowly scum, but she didn't take joy in bullying them. But she would kill them if they got in her way, and would go out of her way to finish the job. But she wouldn't kill humans intentionally.

『There's no choice. Let's hurry and pull the other girls into my camp. First will be Entoma and Shizu.』

“That shouldn't be a problem. Solution and Entoma like to treat humans as food. If we get Entoma to join Albedo-sama's side, Solution might become our ally as well.”

『You are right…. I get it. Let's change the topic… What else did my beloved Ainz-sama do, can you tell me in detail?』

“Yes, as you bid.”

The periodic contact with Albedo was very lively, when Albedo learned that Ainz and Narberal were sleeping in the same room, she let out a weird, noisy scream… It deteriorated to the extent that they had to recast the ‘Message’ spell four times. It irritated Ainz when he came back, but that was another story.

Chapter 1: The Two Adventurers, Part 3

It felt as if the air had been dyed with color, as Britta sniffed a few times like a dog. She wasn't mistaken about the air having a faint smell of greenery. This smell was caused by the grounding of unknown medicines and herbs. This smell also told Britta she had reached her destination. Britta continued to move ahead into the area where the smell was even stronger. After cautiously looking around, she arrived in front of the biggest building.

This building's design was different from the others, which had a store at the front and a workplace in the back. The entire structure was designed to serve as a workshop, without having a storefront like the other buildings. According to the words on the wooden plate that hung on the door and the signs outside, this was the place.

The bell hanging on the door chimed frighteningly loud when she pushed the door open. She entered a hall that seemed to be meant for receiving guests, with two benches facing each other in the middle. Bookcases were placed on the walls and decorative plants were placed in the corners. Britta was greeted by someone the moment she entered the hall: "Welcome!"

It was a male voice, but it sounded too young for a man. She looked around and found a youth dressed in ragged work clothes that were stained with plant sap, which also spread a strong smell. His face was half-covered by his long, blond hair, making it hard to judge his age. But judging by his height and voice, he should still be growing. He might've been just a youth, but Britta could still guess his name. Apart from his grandmother, he was also one of the few famous people of E-Rantel because of his talents.

"… Mister Nfirea Bareare?"

"Yes, that's me." The young man, Nfirea, nodded and asked: "How may I help you?"

"Ah, right. Please wait a moment." Britta took out the folded piece of paper the tavern owner gave her and handed it to the youth approaching her. Nfirea immediately opened it to read its contents. "I see… So that's it. Would you please you show me the potion?" Nfirea received the potion from Britta and lift it to eye level, even though his eyes were covered by his hair.

The atmosphere changed. When Nfirea brushed his hair aside, it was revealed that his features were very pleasant. Many women would be enamored by him in the future. But despite his sharp eyes, the childish air still lingered on his face. Considering the way he spoke, it was hard to imagine his eyes would be this sharp, as they sparkled with intense excitement. Nfirea shook the potion several times and nodded: "Sorry, but it is not convenient to speak here, can we change the place?"

Britta agreed and followed Nfirea's into a messy room. But she only thought so because she was lacking professional knowledge. On the table were flasks, test tubes, distillers, mortars, beakers, alcohol lamps, scales, eerie pots and other things. The shelves on the wall were filled with numerous herbs and minerals. A unique, pungent smell lingered in the room, giving it the impression of being harmful to the body.

The person in the room stared at the two sudden intruders. It was an elderly lady with totally white, shoulder-length hair, whose hands and face were full of wrinkles. Her overalls had more green stains than Nfirea's, giving it a strong smell of grass. Nfirea address the old lady when he entered: "Granny!"

"What is it, no need to be so loud, I can hear you. My ears are still fine." Nfirea only had a paternal grandmother, who was also the best pharmacist in the city, Lizzie Bareare.

"Quick, take a look." Taking the potion Nfirea gave her, Lizzie's intense gaze gave Britta shivers, as if she was facing a powerful veteran. That was no illusion. Pharmacists had to use magic while creating medicine, the more famous the pharmacist, the higher tier spells they could use. That was why Lizzie, the best pharmacist of E-Rantel, was stronger than Britta.

"This potion… Did you bring this here… The legendary potion? No, could it be… The Blood of God? Hey, what potion is this?"

"Eh?" Britta stared wide eyed with her mouth open. *That was what I wanted to ask*, she thought. "Impossible… For a potion like this to exist. Where did you get it from? Some ruins?"

"Eh? Erm, no, that is…"

"What a slow girl. Just answer my question, where did you get this! Did you steal it? Hmmm?"

Britta's shoulders trembled in shock. She didn't do anything wrong, but still felt as if she was getting lectured.

"…Granny, stop scaring her."

"…What are you talking about Nfirea? I am not frightening her… Right?"

No, you are. Nfirea wanted to say, but gulped and spilled the story of how she got this potion: "Ah, erm, this was given to me as compensation by someone."

"…Huh?" Lizzie's eyes turned serious. "It is so valuable…"

"Wait a minute, granny. If I may I ask, Miss Britta, who gave it to you? Why?"

Britta who was aided by Nfirea simply explained she got the potion from a mysterious person in full body armor. Lizzie's wrinkled deepened after hearing it: "…Did you know that there are three types of potions?" Without giving Britta a chance to reply, Lizzie continued:

"The first is made using only herbs. This type is showing its effects only slowly and it will only strengthen a human's base ability. Its effects are minimal but it's cheap. The second is made from herbs and magic. This kind of potion shows it effects more quickly than the first one, but it still needs some time. If there is time after a battle, most adventurers will use this type of recovery potion. The last type are potions created with nothing but magic. It is made by injecting mana into alchemic liquid. The effects of this kind of potion are immediate, but they are very expensive. Now, which type is the potion you brought? I can't see any herb residue, so it should be a potion made with magic. But—"

Lizzie took out a bottle filled with blue liquid and move it before Britta: “This is a basic recovery potion. Notice the color difference? During their creation recovery potions will always turn blue, but yours is red. That means the production process of your potion is different from normal recovery potions. Simply put, this potion is extremely rare and could revolutionize potion brewing techniques… Maybe it’s a little difficult for you to understand what this means.”

After Lizzie was done with her explanation, she activated her magic: “「Item Identification」, 「Detect Magic Enchantment」.” Lizzie used two spells and her expression turned into shock and rage. “Kukuku… Fu hahaha!” …Maniacal laughter erupted in the tiny room. Lizzie slowly lifted her head, revealing a crazed and terrifying smile. Britta was shocked by Lizzie's sudden change and was speechless, she wasn't even able to move a finger.

“Kukuku! Just as I thought! Look carefully at this potion, Nfirea! This is the ultimate form of potions. Right here! We pharmacists, alchemists and everyone related to potion creation were unable to reach this ideal stage even after a long period of research!” Lizzie's cheek was blushing from over-excitement and her breathing became haggard as she panted nonstop. Refusing to let go, she moved the potion in front of Nfirea's face: “Potions will deteriorate. Isn't that right?”

“Yes, of course.”

Compared to Lizzie's excitement, Nfirea's tone was very calm but Britta noticed his expression showed hints of excitement. She doesn't know why the two of them were so excited, but she felt she had been dragged into a major event. The potion she brought along made the strongest pharmacist so excited. “Potions made by using only magic are created with alchemic fluids. These fluids are made using minerals as a base before they’re changed via alchemy, so it is natural for them to deteriorate with time! That's why we need to cast ‘Preserve’.”

At this moment, Lizzie paused and concludes. “That’s how it was before this moment.” Britta slightly understood Lizzie's words and stared at the red liquid in shock. “This bottle! This potion! This red potion! Not deteriorating even without preservation magic, this was the perfect potion! No one had done this before! According to legends, the real recovery potion was the blood of gods.” Lizzie shook the potion in her hand, the bright red liquid swirling inside.

“Of course, that’s just a legend. There is an inside joke among pharmacists that the blood of god was blue.” A moment later, Lizzie looked at the potion that was shaking in her excitedly trembling hand: “This might be the real blood of god!” The panting Lizzie, Nfirea who kept patting her back, the dumbstruck Britta.

The silence of these three was finally broken by Lizzie: “…You came to find out the effects of this potion, right? It’s equivalent to 2nd tier recovery magic. Ignoring the rarity and the intangible values, its price is 8 gold coins. By the way, if you add the intangible values, the potion’s price would be high enough to kill for.”

Britta's whole body trembled. Just the value and its effect was very high for the iron rank adventurer Britta. The problem was the intangible value that even made Lizzie look like she was watching with her sharp eyes for the opportunity to steal it. But there were still doubts in her heart. Why did the man in the full body armor offer her this potion so easily? Who was the person under that armor? As countless question arose in her heart, Lizzie asked: “Do you want to sell it to us? I will give you a good price, how about 32 gold coins?”

Britta's eyes became even wider. The offered price was an amazing amount for Britta. As long as one didn't splurge, this amount of money would be able to feed 3 families for 3 years. Britta hesitated, she knew this potion had incredible value, but was it the right choice to sell it right now for 32 gold coins? The chances of getting another potion like this were slim. But will she live to return if she rejects? Watching the hesitating Britta, Lizzie shook her head and proposed another plan—

Chapter 1: The Two Adventurers, Part 4

The next morning, Ainz, who was calling himself Momon now, opened the guild's door. After entering the building, he saw the counter where three ladies received adventurers with smiles. There were warriors in full body armor, agile looking people with a bow and dressed in light armor, people in priestly attire accessorized with religious symbols… And magic casters with long robes and staffs. There was a large door to the left and a notice board to the right. He didn't see them yesterday, but there were several parchments pasted on it and groups of adventurers were talking in front of them. Feeling annoyed by the scene and the parchments, Ainz approached the counter.

Many looked at the copper medal on Ainz's neck and he could feel them gawking at his entire body, similar to the atmosphere at the tavern yesterday. Ainz observed these adventurers from the corner of his eyes. The medal on their necks were made of silver and platinum, there were no copper medals. Feeling a bit out of place, Ainz walked up to the counter. A group of adventurer just departed, leaving one of the female receptionists free. After reaching her he asked: "Sorry, but I am looking for a job."

"In that case please choose one of the parchments over there and bring it over."

Ainz nodded to express comprehension, all the while feeling as if his sweat glands were working again. He went to the front of the notice board with the parchments. Ainz browsed through them and nodded strongly. *Yup, I can't read.* One of this world's rules was that verbal communication would be translated, but apparently this didn't apply to written words. The last time he visited the guild, he was helped by one of the women working as receptionists and he naively assumed it would be the same this time.

He felt like sighing or rolling on the floor, but was able to pull himself together. Grateful for the changes after getting this body, Ainz racked his brains. The literacy rate here wasn't high, but it would still be awkward if others found out he couldn't read, they might even look down on him. Ainz had given all his word-deciphering tools to Sebas and didn't learn any such magic at all during his time in Yggdrasil.

He used scrolls in place of this seemingly useless magic. Not making any preparations even though he couldn't read the language of this world, that was stupid, but now it was too late for that and regretting it wouldn't help. Narberal couldn't read either, so there was no other way. Although his mind was filled with negative thoughts, as the supreme ruler of Nazarick he should avoid any shameful behavior.

After making up his mind, Ainz tore off one sheet of parchment and headed to the counter: "I want to take this job." The receptionist looked puzzled by the parchment shoved before her and smiled awkwardly: "I am sorry; this job can only be undertaken by mithril ranked adventurers…"

"I know, that's why I took it." Hearing Ainz's calm and determined manner of speech, the receptionist showed a look of surprise.

“Uh, that…”

“I wish to take this job.”

“Huh? But even if you request it, the rules and conditions…”

“The rules are stupid. I’m not willing to repeatedly do these mindless tasks before I am eligible for promotion.”

“But if the job ends in failure, many people will lose their lives.” The receptionist’s firm voice was backed by the guild’s evaluation system and by extension the combined effort of many adventurers.

“Hmmph.” After hearing Ainz contemptuous voice, the adventurers and receptionists turned noticeably unfriendly. This newbie was simply making fun of their adherence to the rules. Ainz thought that them showing such attitude was only natural. Ainz’s body, being that of an undead, was incapable of feeling itchiness or pain, however the vestiges of Suzuki Satoru made Ainz want to profusely bow and apologize.

Suzuki Satoru hated people who “despite having no ideas of their own, still completely refused the suggestions of others”, “people without common sense”. Now that Ainz behaved like the latter, he really wanted someone to beat him up. But Ainz couldn't back off just yet. Despite thinking he should relent, he still had to achieve a more favorable outcome for himself, so Ainz resorted to his killer move.

“The person behind me is my companion. She's a magician of the 3rd tier.” Despite the tense air, everyone looked at Narberal with surprise in their eyes. In this world, magic casters who reached the 3rd tier were considered as having reached the stage of a master. Is this true? Everyone’s eyes were all over Ainz and his regal set of armor, doubting the truth behind his words.

An adventurer’s equipment and abilities were tied: the more capable an adventurer was, the better his equipment became. With his female companion and his regal set of armor, Ainz was very persuasive. Noticing the change in the way they looked at him, Ainz cheered in his heart and decided to strike while the iron was still hot.

“As for me, I am a warrior that matches Nabe’s strength. I can affirm that this level of jobs is a walk in the park for us.” Compared to just now, the surprise of the receptionist and the adventurers around him were smaller. Ainz felt the eyes watching him changing. “We didn’t become adventurers just to perform simple tasks and earn some copper coins. I want to challenge higher rank missions. If you want to see our skills, we can show them to you. Could you let us take this job?”

The hostility from before gradually thinned out, replaced by an atmosphere of ‘he’s right’ and ‘I see’. Adventurers who place emphasis on strength understood Ainz’s words. But the receptionist was different: “…I am very sorry, I can’t let you take this job because of the regulations.”

The figure of the receptionist bowing in apology made Ainz strike a victory pose in his heart. “It can’t be helped then… I was being too forceful, sorry.” Ainz lowered his head slight and

apologized. “Please help me find the most difficult copper medal job. Are there any others apart from those on the board?”

“Ah, I understand. There are other jobs available.” The receptionist got up and just as Ainz was in tears over his complete victory, the voice of a man reached his ears: “How about helping us with our job?”

“Huh?” He couldn’t help growling menacingly. When Ainz turned around, trying to smooth things over, he saw a group of 4 adventurers with silver medals sparkling on their necks. Ainz complained in his heart… *Just when I finally got my way…* And turned around to face them: “The job… Is it a worthwhile job…?”

“Yeah… We think it is worthwhile.” The man who looked like the leader answered. He wore a chainmail armor, numerous chains of rings forming a mesh, which was worn on top of leather armor or chainmail shirt.

A man looking like a warrior. Should he join this man’s team and work together with them? He should decide after hearing their offer, but there was no way for him to tell if the receptionist would still be willing to help him decide which job to accept. On the other hand, taking on their job would allow him to build a relationship with them and get Ainz the information he was after. Ainz nodded slowly: “Since I am seeking worthwhile jobs, let’s work hard together. But I still have to ask what kind of job it is.”

After hearing his response, the man asked the receptionist to prepare a room for them. It was similar to a conference room, a wooden table in the center with chairs placed around it. The men sat next to each other on the chairs inside. “Well, please take a seat.” Ainz sat as requested and Narberal quietly settled down beside him.

The men were young, they didn’t even look 20, but there was nothing childlike about them; they had a sense of maturity beyond their age. They might’ve appeared to be sitting casually, but their positions allowed them to take up their weapons immediately. It might’ve been an unconscious act, or a force of habit after countless experiences with death.

“Before talking about the job, let’s do a simple introduction.” The man who looked like a warrior said on everyone’s behalf. His appearance consisted of blond hair and blue eyes, both of which were common in the Kingdom, while his unremarkable face had smooth features.

“Nice to meet you, I am the leader of ‘the Swords of Darkness’, Peter Mork. This is our team’s Ranger, Lukeluther Bolbu.” The blond haired man with leather armor nodded in acknowledgement. His brown, squinted eyes were cheerful and his long, skinny limbs gave him the impression of a spider. But his thin body was the result of eliminating all fat.

“Next is our magic caster, the strategist of the team. Ninya, a ‘Mage’.”

“Please take care of me.” He was the youngest of the bunch. The man nodding was already of age, he had brown hair and blue eyes, but the smile on his face still looked childish. Unlike the tanned skin of his other team members, his skin was pale and he had the best looking face of the group. Not the manly sort of handsome, but the metrosexual kind. Compared to the other men, his voice had a higher pitch.

But the smile on his face looked like a mask, no different from a fake smile. As for his clothes, while his teammates were clad in armor, he was the only wearing leather clothes. If one were to look under the table, a myriad of strange items could be seen hanging from his belt, including weirdly shaped bottles and strange wooden things. Considering the title of 'mage', he should be similar to Ainz, a power type magic caster.

"…Peter, could you please not use my shameful nickname during the introductions?"

"Eh? But it's cool."

"You have a nickname?" Ainz asked as he wasn't sure what was happening and Lukeluther explained: "He was born with an innate talent, the famous 'genius magic caster'."

"Oh—" Ainz was impressed and sighed; 'Innate Talent' was an information he got after torturing 3 members of the Sunlight Scripture to death, and he was excited to have a real life example in front of him.

Narberal only made an 'hmmp' noise in contempt, but luckily the other party didn't hear that and Ainz relaxed. During a negotiation, an inept subordinate's weird actions would affect the boss' mood, and Ainz was a bit angered by it. But it would be bad to start a fight right now, so Ainz kept his composure. "Nothing impressive. It's just a coincidence that my innate talent belonged to that system."

"Ohh."

Now Ainz was even more interested. He leaned forward and listened carefully. 'Innate talents' were similar to martial arts, they were special skills unique to this world and didn't exist in Yggdrasil. About 1 in 200 possessed this special ability. An innate talent wasn't rare, but the special skills differs widely. There were strong and weak types, with plenty of variations. Like predicting tomorrow's weather with 70% accuracy, strengthening summoned creatures, the ability to harvest plants a few days earlier, using the magic of dragons which existed in the past and so on.

Since this power was determined from birth, there was no way to choose or change it. There were many cases of people unable to harness its full power. For example, the innate talent to increase the destructive power of magic, if the person was unable to use magic, then the innate talent would be wasted. Only the lucky few are able to use their innate talent to its full extent.

Aside from people with powerful innate talent, innate talents that could decide the entire life of a person were rare. A warrior like Gazef Stronoff didn't have innate talent, proving this point. Those with a combat oriented innate talent tended to choose adventuring as a career. That's why you could find many people with innate talents among them. The innate talent possessor before him just happened to be one of the lucky ones who could make full use of his.

"I think your innate talent 'Magic Talent' allows you to learn a spell that would normally take eight years in just four years? I'm not a magic caster, so I'm not sure how great that is." Since Ainz had a magic related class, he was curious and desired to collect this information. Getting abilities not available to the Great Tomb of Nazarick would be useful for his guild. If there was a way to steal this ability, it would be worth the risk even if he had to make enemies.

The ability to shorten learning time should be a type of tier surpassing magic, 'Wish upon a Star'. The two of them continue to converse, unaware of Ainz's menacing look under his helmet: "…I am lucky to possess this ability from birth, it allows me to take the first step for my dream. If it wasn't for this ability, I would be just a commoner spending his whole life busily." The low voice contained gloom and heaviness.

Peter tried to change the mood and spoke in a different tone: "No matter what, you are a famous innate talent possessor in this city."

"But there is someone more famous than me."

"The leader of 'Blue Rose'?"

"That person is famous too, but I am talking about this city."

"You mean Bareare!"

This name was loudly exclaimed by the last man who hadn't been introduced yet. Ainz was interested about this name and asked: "…What innate talent does this person have?" The four of them looked surprised, it appeared that this was an obvious matter. Ainz slipped up because of his curiosity and his desire to obtain this ability and strengthen Nazarick.

He regretted his mistake, telling himself he can recover from a mistake of this level. But before Ainz could explain, the other party came to their own conclusion: "I see, wearing such flashy armor and bringing such a beauty with you. No wonder we know nothing about you, it's because you're not from here, right?"

This helpful response caused Ainz to nod: "That's it, you are right. We just arrived here yesterday."

"Oh, so you don't know? He's a famous person in this city, but it looks like his name didn't spread to the other cities yet, right?"

"Yes, I've never heard of him. Would you mind telling me?"

"His name is Nfirea Bareare, he's the grandson of a famous pharmacist. His innate talent is the ability to use any magic item. Not just scrolls from a different magical system, but also items restricted to races other than humans. Items that are restricted to royalty should be fine as well."

"…Oh." Ainz tries to suppress the alarm in his voice and sigh. He could use his innate talent to that extent? The Staff of Ainz Ooal Gown, barring rare conditions, it was an item only the Guildmaster could use, and a legendary item as well. Could this person use all of them? Or was there a limit? This was a person he should be wary of, but his value as a pawn was also high. Narberal felt the same. She moved her mouth close to where his ear would be under the helmet, and said in a wary tone: "I think that man is dangerous."

"…I know. Coming to this city was the right choice."

"Momon-san, what is it?"

"Oh, it's nothing, don't mind me. By the way, can you introduce your last friend to me?"

“Alright. He is a druid, Dyne Woodwonder. He can use healing spells, nature manipulation magic and he’s also knowledgeable about herbs. Please tell him immediately if you feel unwell, he has medicine that’s useful against stomach pains.”

“Please take care of me!”

The man greeting him had a huge beard covering his mouth and coupled with his bulky body he looked like a barbarian. But he still looked younger than Ainz. He had the faint smell of grass on him, which seemingly came from the pouches on his waist. “Next will be us. This is Nabe and I’m Momon. Pleased to meet you.”

“Pleased to meet you.”

“Alright, pleased to meet you both. Momon-san, you can just address us by name. Sorry for getting to the topic so fast, but let’s talk about the job. Actually, what we want to ask of you is not really a job.”

“Then…” Hearing Ainz’s baffled voice, Peter lifted his hand to stop him, wanting Ainz to ask his question later. “The job is to hunt the monsters around the city.”

“Monster extermination…?” Then it was a job. Or was there some adventurer regulation that made it not a job? Ainz wanted to ask, but if that was common sense, it would be troubling if the others thought he lacked knowledge, so he asked something harmless.

“What kind of monster are we exterminating?”

“Ah, it’s not really about exterminating monsters. We’re hunting monsters and depending on their strength, the city will pay a suitable reward through the guild. What is this kind of activity called in Momon-san’s country?” So that’s it. Ainz finally understood why Peter said this wasn't really a job: according to Yggdrasil game knowledge this activity would be called 'farming monsters'.

“This is something we have to do to earn a livelihood.” The druid, Dyne interrupted with a low voice. Lukeluther joined in: “It’s not just a livelihood for us, it reduces the danger to the people around us, ensures the safety of traveling merchants and secures the nation’s tax collection. No one will lose out from our actions.”

“Most guilds and nations do this, but it was unheard of 5 years ago, isn’t that surprising?”

Everyone on the team nodded in agreement with Ninya’s words. They discussed among themselves, giving Ainz no chance to join in. It would be too strange to know nothing about this country, so Ainz decided to shut up and listen. “All of this is thanks to the Golden Princess’s wisdom.”

“It wasn’t put into place, but she wanted to execute this policy even if she had to exempt taxes of the adventurers.”

“Oh, she regarded adventurers so highly.”

“That’s right. An armed organization that doesn’t swear fealty towards a country might even be seen as an enemy. Even the Empire wasn’t so magnanimous.”

"That princess was rather wise, proposing many virtuous policies… It's just that most of them were rejected."

"I want to marry a beauty like that—"

"Then work hard and become a noble?"

"Ah— Impossible, I can't accept such a restrictive lifestyle."

"I think being a noble isn't bad. The laws of the Kingdom allow the aristocrats to oppress the citizens, letting them do as they wish."

There was strong sarcasm under Ninya's smile. Ainz raised his non-existent eyebrow under his helmet while Narberal remained unmoved. Lukeluther intentionally used a light tone and said: "Wah— your tongue is vicious like usual. You really hate nobles—"

"I know some of the aristocrats are honorable men, but because of that pig who snatched my elder sister away, I can't help hating them."

"…We are going too far off-topic! These aren't things we should be saying in front of Momon-san and Nabe-san who will be fighting alongside us."

Attempting to get back to the main topic, Peter faked a cough and said: "That's all, we will explore the surrounding areas. Because it's near the newly developed region, there might be no monsters that are too strong. Will Momon-san be unsatisfied with this?" Peter took out a parchment and laid it on the table, it appeared to be a map of the nearby region. Information about villages, forests and streams were marked simply on it.

"Basically, we are exploring the southern parts." From the center of the parchment he dragged his finger to the forest in the south. "We are mainly hunting monsters in the forest near the borders to the Slane Theocracy. The only monsters who can use ranged weapons to attack from the rear will be goblins."

"But the rewards for disposing such a weak monster isn't high."

Ainz was suspicious of the group's easy-going attitude. As far as Ainz knew, Yggdrasil's goblins had all sorts of names and ranged from level 1 to 50. Their differences in strength varied widely, you couldn't just lump all goblins together. It could be disastrous if you weren't careful. Was their relaxed attitude due to their conviction that high level goblins won't turn up, or were the goblin in this world only that powerful? "…Won't powerful goblins show up?"

"There are powerful goblins, but they won't show up at the forest we are heading to. The strong goblins are usually tribal leaders; they won't activate the whole tribe."

"The goblins also know the human's area of influence, so they understand attacking en masse would be disastrous. Especially the powerful goblins that are intelligent."

"Nabe-san can use 3rd tier spells, so there are no problems even if we do encounter them, right?"

“I see. But I have to remind you, there are goblins that can use 3rd tier spells as well. Can you tell me what kind of monsters we might encounter for reference?”

The Swords of Darkness members turned to Ninya. Understanding their intentions, he assumed a teacher’s expression and started to explain: “We are likely to meet goblins and their wolves. As for other monsters, there are no records of strong enemies showing up in the region. The most dangerous monsters in the plains are probably ogres.”

“We won't enter the forest?”

“Yes, because the forest is dangerous. Jumping leeches and jumping bugs are still manageable. But Execution Spiders that shoot webs from treetops and forest snakes that attack from below with gaping mouths are hard to handle.”

So that was the reason. Ainz nodded in comprehension. They were hunting monsters that wandered from the forest into the plains. “That's the plan Momon-san. What do you think? Willing to lend us a hand?”

“…Yes, please take care of me then… But before that, can I confirm the wages?”

“Ah, that's right, wages are important. In principle, Momon-san's team will be cooperating with our team, so we will split the earnings.”

“Considering the number of members, this arrangement seems very generous.”

“But Momon-san’s team will need to handle half the monsters we encounter. We can only use spells up to 2nd tier. Taking this into consideration, it’s a fair arrangement.”

Ainz pretended to consider for a moment before nodding in agreement: “This arrangement is fine, let’s fight together. Since we will be working alongside each other, I will let everyone see my face.” Ainz took off his helmet after finishing, surprising the four of them with his looks. “Black hair and eyes just like Nabe-san, you don't seem to be from around here. I heard people like Momon-san are common in the south, do you hail from there?”

“Yes, we came from a land faraway.”

“He is older than expected, old enough to be called 'uncle’.”

“That's rude, a warrior on the level of a 3rd tier magician like Nabe should be about this age.”

“Nabe-san is great.”

Not only was Ainz's hearing good enough to hear Peter, he was also able to hear everything the other three men were whispering to each other. Ainz felt uncomfortable being referred to as an old man, but that would be normal in the eyes of these youngsters. If sixteen was old enough to be considered as an adult, then Ainz was indeed an uncle.

“Now that you’ve seen what I look like, I’ll continue to hide my face. We might get into unnecessary trouble if others learn I’m a foreigner.” Ainz said as he put his helmet back on again.

A gleeful smile surfaced under the helmet. To be on the safe side, Ainz casted an illusion spell earlier. Although it was a low-grade spell that was broken by any physical contact.

“Since we will be hunting together, it would be best if we sort out any issues. Do you have any questions for us?”

“Me!” Hearing Ainz's question, Lukeluther's shot up strongly. After confirming no one other than him had any queries, Lukeluther asked Narberal in a clear voice: “Please tell me what the relationship between you two is!” The place turned silent. Ainz didn't know the intent behind this question, while Peter's team knew exactly what Lukeluther was after.

“…We are companions.” After Ainz answered, Lukeluther's next question caused an uproar. “I have fallen for you! It's love at first sight! Please go out with me!” Everyone looked at Lukeluther, knowing he wasn’t trying to deepen their relationship with a joke. Ainz shifted his gaze onto Narberal, who was now the focus of attention, as she took a deep breath and said: “Shut up, you lower lifeform (slug). Learn your place, or do you want me to rip out your tongue the next time you open your mouth?” The silence became even deeper. “Ah, no…”

Ainz wants to soften the mood, but Lukeluther spoke first: “Thank you for your firm rejection! Let us start as friends!”

“Die, lower life form. How can I be friends with you (maggot)? Want me to scoop out your eyes with a spoon?” As everyone looked away from the bickering couple, Peter and Ainz bowed towards each other and apologized. “…My teammate caused trouble for you.”

“No, I should be the one apologizing.”

“Let’s just assume there aren’t any problems, will that be alright?” Peter said while looking at everyone, ignoring the gleeful Lukeluther and the cold Narberal.

“Momon-san, let’s move out when you are ready. We are already prepared.” When Momon heard the term ‘prepare’, Ainz suddenly remembered. He had bought only the minimum necessities from the tavern owner. Although Ainz and Narberal didn't want to waste space with food and beverages they wouldn't need, it would be suspicious if they never ate anything, therefore they should prepare some.

“Okay. We can move out as soon as the preparations for the food supply are done.”

“You just need food? If you don’t have any specific shop you want to patronize, want to buy some dry rations over the counter? They will prepare it for you immediately.”

“Is that so? That’s fine with me, we can complete the preparations now.”

“Then let’s go.”

Everyone got up and left the room. After returning to the guild, they found the number of adventurers inside had increased. Several groups could be seen loitering near the parchments, but almost all of them were focused on one young man. The blond, young man was talking to a receptionist and the other two were also listening carefully. If business was great when Ainz came

just now, the situation had taken a 180 degree turn. The receptionist's face, no, her mouth was in the shape of an O. It was an expression of shock and she was looking right at Ainz.

What's happening? Just when Ainz was feeling baffled, the receptionist got up, walked over and said: "There is a job request asking for you by name." Her words changed the atmosphere drastically and Ainz could feel curious eyes staring at him unreservedly. The Swords of Darkness members were all surprised. Seeing the strange twist in atmosphere, Narberal moved slightly. That was preparation for battle in case of emergencies. Ainz became anxious.

Not good, Narberal's action were not good. From Narberal's perspective, she might believe the change in their surroundings to be abnormal and take actions to protect Ainz. But that was too obvious in this scene. Judging from common sense, you would normally not take such actions. Defending should be the first priority, but this was too thoughtless. *This fool. Albedo is the same, just what are they thinking. No… They're definitely not using their brains. Just because they discriminate against humans they think it is fine to squash them like bugs.*

Since all members of 'Ainz Ooal Gown' were from heteromorphic races, it was unavoidable for them to have such an attitude, but they still needed to be mindful of the right time and place. The troubled Ainz wanted to ask his past guild mates "Why make this sort of NPC?" While the character setting doesn't matter, but they should have at least some basic ability to deal with others, and know how to act according to the time, place and situation by reading the mood.

There was no time to lecture here in this situation. If the others noticed that Narberal was preparing for battle, there was no telling how big a mess it would make. Ainz immediately used his hand to chop Narberal on the head. He didn't use his full strength, but the strike from the metallic arm seemed to cause some pain. When the confused and surprised Narberal looked at Ainz with teary eyes, he ignored her and asked the receptionist: "Who made the request?" Ainz rebuked himself after asking, it was obviously the young man before him.

"Yes. It's Nfirea Bareare-san." He heard this name just now, just as he was thinking that, the youth came over: "Hello. I am the requester." The young man nodded as he greeted Ainz, who also nodded in reply. "As for the request—", Ainz interrupted with his hand raised before the young man finished: "My apologies, but I have already signed a contract for another job, so I can't take yours." The tension in the place increased, and the members of the 'Swords of Darkness' were exceptionally excited. "Momon-san! This is a request by name." Peter's reaction made Ainz doubtful, was a request by name so surprising? But—

"That might be the case, but I should carry out the job I was assigned before that, right?" Ainz judgement was sound and the adventurers around them also nodded in agreement. A suggestion out of goodwill was raised at this moment: "B-But… Our job is not really a request; we can't even pay you any reward if we don't encounter any monsters…" Peter stuttered as he uncertainly informed Ainz.

A job request from the youth who had a famous grandmother and was renowned himself, was a huge step up compared to wandering around hunting monsters for bounties. That's why Peter had such a reserved attitude. Ainz who made this conclusion said gently: "…How about this, Peter-san. Bareare-san had not discussed with me the contract details, remuneration and timeline, I will decide after hearing his piece."

“I'm fine with that. I want to start soon of course, but it can wait a day or two.”

“How about letting our friends from Swords of Darkness listen in to our discussion. If we make a deal… No, if we can't make a deal, please allow me to take on the job I had promised them.”

“Eh? Momon-san, will it be fine for us to attend too?”

“Yes. I wish for your opinion as one of the parties involved.”

Receiving consent from the Swords of Darkness, Ainz and the others returned to the room they were in moments ago. Things felt rushed. Ainz smiled sheepishly again, sitting in his original seat. Narberal was beside him, the youth left a one seat gap between him and Ainz. The Swords of Darkness team sat in their original seats like Ainz.

Among this group, the first to speak up was the youth: “The receptionist already mentioned this, but allow me to reintroduce myself. I am Nfirea Bareare, working as a pharmacist in this city. As for the content of the job, I planned to journey to the nearby forest. As everyone knows, the forest is very dangerous, and that's why I wish for you to be my escort and help with gathering herbs if possible.”

“Bodyguard. I see.” Ainz nodded calmly, thinking about the difficulties of this job.

Ainz knew he was strong and together with Narberal he would be able to wipe out any attacking monsters. Since Ainz and Narberal were both magic casters, they didn’t have any shield-like abilities or skills to protect others, so he wasn’t confident in being an escort. “The remunerations will be higher—”

“Please wait a moment. Being an escort would be better suited for you guys, Peter-san. Would you like to be under my employ instead?”

“Eh?”

“For escort and herb gathering tasks, having the Ranger Lukeluther-san and Druid Dyne-san assistance would be more efficient.”

“Oh! Momon-san has great foresight. Druids can fully utilize their powers in the forest and will be more powerful than rangers like Lukeluther.” Dyne's deep voice was full of arrogance, while Lukeluther looked displeased. “What a thing to say, Dyne.”

“Taking the abilities of a Druid into consideration, it’s an undeniable fact! And don't forget I have also dabbled in the arts of medicine!”

“Hmmm… Peter, I'm fine with it. I will show you how strong I am compared to Druid-san.”

“This means everyone is in. We will hunt any monsters we encounter and turn them over to the city for extra money. How about splitting Bareare-san equally between the 6 of us, Peter-san?”

“If Momon-san thinks it is okay, we have no objections.”

“Bareare-san, sorry for the wait. Will it be convenient for everyone present to take on your job?”

“I see, I'm okay with it. I will be relying on you all. Ah, please just call me Bareare.”

Ainz's group started introducing themselves. Narberal gave him a dirty look, but still finished her introduction. “As for the plan, we will head for Carne village to set up a base and afterwards head into the forest, that's our usual practice. The number of days we will spend gathering herbs will depend on our harvest. But it will be at most three days, the average in the past was two.”

“How do we get there?”

“There’s a horse carriage, but it will be filled with containers for the gathered herbs, so there won't be any space for you to sit in.”

“Can we resupply our food stock in Carne village?”

“Water will be fine, but food will be a bit hard. Carne isn’t a large village.” The members of the Swords of Darkness started to discuss the necessary preparations and asked Bareare various questions.

Seeing this, Ainz enquired: “May I ask a few questions?” Seeing the youth nod with a smile, Ainz stated his first query: “Why me? I only came to this city by stagecoach recently, so I don’t know anyone here and I’m not famous. But you asked for me despite that and since you mentioned ‘the usual practice’ just now and that means you hired other adventurers before correct? What happened to them?” Ainz’s gaze under the helmet became sharp. He didn’t know why the youth asked for him. If his cover was blown, he would need a new disguise and method of approach.

Observing carefully, since half of the young man’s face was covered by his bangs, he couldn’t see his eyes clearly, he still couldn’t see through the youth’s real motive. Was he just thinking too deeply, just as Ainz was feeling doubtful, Nfirea answered: “Ah, the adventurers I used to hire seem to have left E-Rantel for other cities. That’s why I am looking for new adventurers. Also… I heard about the incident at the tavern from the customers visiting my place.”

“Tavern incident?”

“Yes, I heard that someone easily threw an adventurer one rank higher than him.”

“I see…” He wanted to display his strength and raise his fame back then. Did the youth take the bait?

As Ainz was feeling relieved, the young man pointed at the copper medal on Ainz’s chest and added jokingly: “And copper medal adventurers are cheaper, right? We might be able to work together for a longer term.”

“Haha, indeed.” Hiring a fresh recruit, Ainz understood that feeling. He felt his wariness easing, but there was still something that worried him. If that was really the case… While Ainz was thinking, the others asked several questions and Nfirea answered them one at a time. After making sure no one else had any questions, Nfirea said: “Let’s hit the road after the preparations are done!”

Chapter 1: The Two Adventurers, Part 5

It was the middle of the night when a dark figure floated across E-Rantel's great cemetery. Dressed in a black, hooded cape, it advanced in a unique, ghostly fashion without moving its shoulders or waist. The figure nimbly evaded the magic light of the cemetery, entering the inner parts.

After the shadow reached a shrine, it removed its hood. It was a young woman around twenty years old, at the peak of her youth. Her features were delicate, giving her a cat-like beauty. She might've looked cute, but hidden underneath her expression was the ferocity of a carnivorous beast that might lash out at any moment.

“Finally here.” The woman said in a joking tone, brushing her short blond bangs as she pushed the stone door of the shrine open. The sound of metal creaking against metal came from under her cloak, just like a chain armor. Inside the shrine, the stone platform were dead bodies would be placed were empty. All the offerings for those who passed on had been removed. The stone seemed to have had absorbed large quantities of perfume; the sweet smell irritated the woman’s nose. She frowned slightly and moved towards the stone platform.

“Hmmm-hmm-hmm~ he~” The woman hummed as she pressed an unremarkable marking below the seat. When the marking was depressed, a clicking sound was heard, indicating that a gear had snapped into place. A heartbeat later, cracking sounds could be heard as the seat moved slowly, revealing stairs leading underground.

“Coming in~” The woman dragged the ending of her words in a carefree manner and walked down the stairs. Turning around the corner in the middle, she arrived in a vast space. The mud in the walls and floor were exposed, but it had been processed by craftsmen and wouldn't collapse easily. The air wasn't stale; it was rather fresh from a ventilation somewhere. This place wasn't part of the cemetery, but somewhere more sinister.

Strange tapestries hung from the walls, with red candles made from blood below it, emitting a faint glow and the smell of charred blood. The flickering candle flame cast countless shadows. There were several caves within this space, and all of them were rank with the unique smell of low-level undead. The woman surveyed her surroundings until her eyes lingered on one spot.

“Hey~, the person hiding over there, a guest is here~” The man who was hiding in a dark corner and spying on her shuddered. “Hello~ I am here to meet Kaji-chan, is he here~?” The man was at a loss on what to do, and started trembling when the sound of her footsteps approached him. “It's fine. You are dismissed.”

These words were spoken by another man who suddenly stepped out into the open, addressing the man hiding in the shadows. He was a skinny man. His eyes were sunken in, and his complexion was completely different from a healthy person. He didn't have any hair on his body. Not only was he bald, he didn't even have any eyebrows or -lashes.

His appearance made it hard to judge his age, but he couldn’t be too old since his skin wasn't wrinkled. This man was dressed in a dark red robe and around his neck was a chain made from

the bones of small animals. His hands were just bones covered with skin and in one of his hands, which had yellowish nails, he held a black staff. He looked more like an undead monster than a human.

“Hi~ Kaji-chan.” The woman’s casual tone made the man frown. “Can you not call me that? It tarnishes the name of Zuranon.” Zuranon. A powerful, evil, and secret organization with a notorious leader. Made up of veteran magic casters, they were the masterminds behind several tragedies and were treated with hostility by surrounding nations.

“Is that so…?” The woman seemed to be ignoring the man’s request to change her way of addressing him, causing his frown to deepen. “…So? Why are you here? You knew I was injecting energy into the Pearl of Death here. If you plan to make trouble, I have my ways of dealing with you.” The man squinted, gripping his staff tightly.

“How mean~ Kaji-chan. I came to bring you this~” The woman showed a cute smile while she searched for something under her cape. After finding the item, she happily held it out in her hand. It was a crown. Countless small jewels decorated the gold threads, like droplets on a spider web. It was a delicate artwork. The center of the crown, where the forehead should be, was a large jewel which looked like a black crystal.

“This is!” The man was tongue tied. He was looking at it from a distance, but he was very sure this was the crown he saw a long time ago. “The symbol of the Miko Princess, the ‘Crown of Wisdom’! Isn’t this one of the greatest treasures of the Slane Theocracy?”

“That’s correct~ I saw a cute girl wearing this strange crown, but since it didn’t suit her I took it~ But then I got a shock! She immediately went berserk~ letting her bowels go~” The woman kept laughing. If one snatched ‘Crown of Wisdom’ away from its current bearer, which was a central figure of the Slane Theocracy’s magic ceremonies, the Miko Princess would end up in a terrible state.

There was no way that this woman, who was a former member of the Black Scripture, didn't know exactly what would happen if she did so. After all, it was the task of the Black Scripture to send the mad Miko Princess to the Gods after the crown was removed, in order to allow the next Miko Princess to ascend.

“But it can’t be helped. It was the only way to obtain this~ it wasn’t my fault; it was the fault of the crown’s creator~.” There was no way to safely remove the crown, except for destroying it. The crown sealed the wearer’s self, turning the human itself into a high-class magic item, there shouldn’t be anyone who’d be so wasteful and destroy someone like that. But there was this unhinged person.

“Hmmph, the thing I had to steal at the expense of betraying the Black Scripture is trash. I should have taken the divine artefact left behind by the Six Gods.”

“Calling it trash is a bit…” The man called out the woman who was posing and puffing her cheek out: “But it is trash, right? Only one in 10,000 women can wear this item. It will be hard to find someone suitable outside a nation like the Slane Theocracy.”

The Slane Theocracy was the only nation in the region with a population register. Using the register, they were able to easily find somebody suitable to wear the crown, a sacrifice. If it wasn't for this, it would be hard to find suitable candidates even with Zuranon's influence. "It's impossible to steal that divine artefact anyway~ It's protected by the strongest monster in the Black Scripture who went beyond the physical limits of humans. The blood of the 6 Gods runs in its veins, an atavistic bastard~"

"Demigods… Are those guys that strong? I've only heard about them from you."

"Those guys are beyond the realm of being strong. You didn't know because the information is classified~ if those who knew were interrogated using mind control, it would be disastrous. It was said that if news leaked out, it would start a war with the remaining forces of the true 'Dragon King'. The Theocracy will be affected and might even be destroyed, so I hope you can pretend you didn't hear anything~"

"Sounds unbelievable."

"You only think so because you haven't witnessed that power~ back on topic: Khajit Dale Batantier, as one of the 12 core members, will you be willing to lend me a hand?" The woman finally changed her tone. "Oh, showing your true colors in the end? The body double of the Empress of Tears… And don't call me Dale, I don't use that name anymore."

"…Don't call me the body double of the Empress of Tears either okay? Call me Clementine."

"…Clementine, what do you want me to help you with?"

"Isn't there an outstanding person with an innate talent in this city? That guy might be able to wear this item~"

"…I see, it's that rumored guy. But can't you kidnap one human by yourself?"

"Yes, you are right, but I want to create *havoc* when I take action too~"

"I see… And escape in the chaos…"

"I can help you with the ritual, what do you think? It's a great deal right~?" The man, Khajit squinted his eyes, smiling sinisterly: "That's wonderful, Clementine. If you are willing to assist, the festival of death will be finished ahead of schedule. No problem, I will do everything I can to aid you."

第二章 旅程

Chapter 2: Journey, Part 1

There were two routes from E-Rantel to Carne village if you travel by horse-drawn carriage. After going north, keep right by hugging the edge of the forest. Or go east then turn north. This time the former route was chosen. Since there was a higher chance of encountering monsters along the edge of the forest, taking this path was the wrong choice from a bodyguard's perspective.

Even so, everyone still chose this route. This was done in order for Ainz to fulfil his promise to Peter and hunt monsters. Although there was a lot more to lose than to gain, they were still able to choose this path without worries because Momon and Nabe were there. In addition, Narberal demonstrating her ability to cast 3rd tier magic 'Lightning' when they left the city was a big factor.

And technically they were not entering the forest. Rather, they were traveling along the border between the forest and the plains, so the monsters they might encounter wouldn't be too strong. With the ability of the group, they should be able to manage. In addition, by taking this route, the monster encounters would allow the members to verify each other's combat prowess. With these points in mind, they decided on this route.

The sun reached its zenith after they left E-Rantel; they could see a dense, primitive forest in the distance. The giant trees' luscious branches and leaves were dense to the extent that sunlight could not penetrate the forest. This reduced visibility produced the illusion of being swallowed by darkness. The gaps between the trees looked like gaping maws, waiting for prey to enter; the eeriness made the party uneasy.

The group adopted a formation that surrounded the carriage as they advanced. The driver is of course Nfirea, the ranger Lukeluther was in front of the carriage, the warrior Peter on the left, the druid Dyne and magic caster Ninya on the right, while Ainz and Narberal were at the back. Because the field of vision was wide, no one was on guard. However, Peter became more serious at this point: "Momon-san, from here on will be dangerous grounds. We won't encounter monsters we can't handle, but to be safe, we need to careful."

"Understood." Ainz nodded and thought of something. *If this was a game, what monster that we will encounter is dependent on the place, but reality is different. God knows what kind of difficult enemy might pop up.* Based on the battle of Carne from a few days prior, and according to the intelligence revealed by the interrogated Sunlight Scripture prisoners, Ainz was confident that he was strong. But that was his power as a magic caster; Ainz was currently wearing armor forged by magic, and thus was unable to chant most of his spells.

With his suppressed strength, could he still play the role of a competent vanguard? Not only that, but an escort's victory condition was not to defeat the enemy; rather, his job was to thoroughly protect his charge, in this case, Nfirea. Pondering this, Ainz felt uneasy. He planned to dispel his armor if a crisis arose, but in doing so, he would have to kill his traveling companions or alter their memories. Ainz didn't wish to do such a thing. *That's too much of a hassle.*

Ainz turned his head and looked at Narberal, who nodded upon sensing his gaze. They had discussed beforehand and Narberal was to use higher tier magic in a pinch, up to 5th tier and hope to resolve the problem. If this weren't enough, Ainz would dispel his armor and fight seriously.

Seeing the duo exchange gazes, with Ainz still wearing a closed helmet, Lukeluther misunderstood something and flirtingly joked with Narberal: “It’ll be fine, don't worry. As long as there's no surprise attack, it won't be too hard. And with me scouting, no enemies will sneak by. So Nabe-chan, I am strong right?” Narberal ignored Lukeluther and his serious expression: “Momon-san, may I crush this… Lower life form (mosquito)?”

“Cold words from Nabe-san get!” Everyone smiled awkwardly at Lukeluther, who gave a thumbs up and didn't react to Narberal's cruel response.

They assumed that Narberal didn’t consider all humans as lower life forms, only specific people. Ainz rejected Narberal's sincere request and felt his non-existent stomach hurting. They were journeying with humans now, so he wished that she would keep such thoughts to herself. Nfirea seemed to have misunderstood something and interjected: “It will be fine. From here to Carne village, we are in the territory of the 'Virtuous King of the Forest', a powerful monster. Unless we are extremely unlucky, we won't encounter any monsters.”

“Virtuous King of the Forest?” Ainz recalled the intelligence collected from Carne village. ‘Virtuous King of the Forest’ is a monster capable of using magic, possessing incredible power. It lives deep in the forest, so there are few eyewitness reports, but its existence has been around for quite a long while. Some even say it is a several hundred years old four-legged silver-ish, white beast with a snake-like tail.

I want to meet it. I’m not sure if rumors are true, but it might possess incredible intelligence if it’s been alive for so long. It got the title of Virtuous King of the Forest after all. If I can capture it… It should bolster Nazarick’s strength. Ainz imagined the appearance of the monster in his mind. *Speaking of the Virtuous King of the Forest, some extinct animals looked… Looked like monkey… Ah, orangutans. Forest man… Or sage? With a snake as its tail… Was there such a monster?*

Thinking Yggdrasil had that sort of monster, Ainz finally found the answer: *It’s a Nue! …The appearance should be the head of a monkey, body of a raccoon, limbs of a tiger and tail of a snake… I’m not sure if it was a monster from Yggdrasil, but it might have been summoned just like those angels.* As Ainz was thinking about Nue in Yggdrasil, Lukeluther spoke to Narberal in a flirty tone again: “Hmmm, if I complete my job flawlessly, would the cute Nabe-chan change her attitude towards me?”

Narberal clicked her tongue with disgust. Lukeluther acted as if he were hurt, but no one consoled him. Everyone treated their interactions as a comedy. Under the scorching sun, the group chatted leisurely as they advanced. Their shoes were stained by juice from trampled grass, the smell of which was prominent. Looking at the group wiping away their sweat, Ainz was grateful for his undead body. He was unfazed by the bright sunshine and wasn’t tired from wearing the heavy armor.

Only Lukeluther remained lively, joking while the group moved in silence: “Everyone, there is no need to be so careful since I am on lookout. Nabe-chan trusts me; look at how calm she is.”

"Not because of you. It's because Momon-san is here." Narberal frowned. Thinking that things might get out of hand, Ainz placed his hand on Narberal's shoulder, and her expression warmed instantly. Observing their interaction, Lukeluther asked: "Say, Nabe-chan and Momon-san, are you two a couple?"

"Co-Couple? What are you saying! That's Albedo-sama!"

"You!" Ainz shouted. "What are you saying, Nabe!"

"Ah!" With her eyes wide open, Narberal covered her mouth with her hands.

Ainz coughed and spoke coldly: "…Lukeluther-san, could you please not make baseless assumptions?"

"…Ah, my bad. Just kidding. Ah, could it be that Momon-san already has a significant other?" The way Lukeluther bowed suggested that he wasn't sorry at all, but Ainz wasn't as mad as before. Picking Narberal as a companion was a really stupid decision. But despite thinking that he picked the wrong person, Ainz didn't really have a choice since she was the only one he could rely on. Almost all of the created NPC's in Ainz Ooal Gown were heteromorphic; only few of them could be brought into a human city. Narberal was pretending to be a human, and at least she had the appearance of one…

But Ainz forgot to take her personality into consideration. From the look of things, maybe the other battlemaid, Lupusregina Beta, would've been more suitable, but it was already too late for that. Because of her blunder, Narberal's face was pale, so Ainz gently patted her on the back to calm her.

A good superior must be able to forgive the first mistake of his subordinate. But if she repeated her mistake, he would need to reprimand her appropriately. If she became depressed or reserved because of a mistake, then the mission would be negatively affected thereafter. More importantly, she only mentioned Albedo's name. There was no need to alter memories… Probably.

"Lukeluther, cut the crap and stay alert."

"Got it."

"Momon-san, I'm sorry for the rudeness of my companion. It is wrong to make conjectures about the affairs of others."

"Don't worry. If he can keep that in mind in the future, we can just let this go." The two of them looked at Lukeluther's back and heard him mumbled "Wah—, Nabe-chan hates me now. Ugu, her opinion of me is totally negative." His head depressingly drooped. "That fool…! I will lecture him later. And I will pretend I didn't hear anything just now."

"Well, I will have to trouble you with that. Since Lukeluther is on guard, let's leave it to him. I would like to find out a few things."

"No problem. He caused trouble for you, so just let him work to compensate you." After Peter smiled in acknowledgement, Ainz walked to Ninya and Dyne's side. He switched positions with Dyne, who then walked alongside Narberal.

“I have a few questions related to magic.” After Ninya nodded, Ainz started to ask. Nfirea looked over as well, interested in Ainz’s question. “If bewitched or controlled by magic, a person may divulge confidential information. As a countermeasure, are there any spells that will conditionally kill an affected a person after he answers a few questions?”

“I’ve never heard of such magic.” Ainz turned and looked at Nfirea from behind his helmet.

“I don’t know either. Magic to correct or strengthen something can be activated after a fixed period of time, but not to the extent you speak of.”

“…I see.” Ainz was disappointed to not hear the answer he was hoping for. And so, the problem of how to use the survivors of the Sunlight Scripture will have to wait. The survivors were few, but it would be a waste to dispose of them. To understand the magical theory behind why the Sunlight Scripture members disappeared after dying, they performed dissection on a few of them alive, which was really wasteful.

Since they died so easily, wouldn't it have been better to squeeze more information from them? Losing one person meant forgoing the chance to ask 3 questions. The most regrettable was Nigan, who was the first to die. They lost the one who probably held a lot of information over a few simple questions. But this failure taught Ainz that using merely the knowledge he had from Yggdrasil wasn’t enough to handle this world, so Nigan’s death wasn’t a complete waste. It was better to look on the bright side, as he had learnt plenty from this failure too.

As Ainz distractedly thought about these matters, Ninya continued: “Be as it may, my magic knowledge is quite limited. Magic casters sponsored and educated by a country might be able to create such a spell. The priests in the Slane Theocracy received a divine magic caster education. The Empire has mystics, warlocks and mages, arcane magic caster schools. It wouldn’t be surprising if other states such as the Agrando Republic being able to use dragon magic.”

“I see. With the backing of an entire nation, it wouldn't be surprising for any sort of magic to pop up.”

From the intelligence he garnered earlier, the Agrando Republic was a state formed by demi-humans, with councilors setting the policies. Most worthy of note were the Five Dragon Councilors, said to be very powerful. The Republic was a potential threat to the Slane Theocracy, which preached the principle of human supremacy. Ainz was interested in this country, but he was still building his base and couldn’t spare the effort to investigate. Just carrying out the current plans had already depleted a lot of Nazarick’s resources.

“Can I ask about something else?” Ainz asked Ninya other questions and felt satisfied. Ainz asked Ninya and Peter many things, causing the Swords of Darkness members to look at them with the kind of look that said “They are still chatting”. They talked about spells, martial arts, adventurers, news about the neighboring nation, all in all a wide range of things. Although these questions needed to be worded carefully, but the responses were very helpful. Ainz was confident that he had learnt a lot more about this world.

But it still wasn’t enough. After learning one thing, more questions popped up, especially when it came to magic. A world built with magic as a foundation was really different, which really surprised Ainz. The biggest difference was the level of civilization. It appeared to be at the Middle

Ages, but it was actually only a few generations behind Ainz's world; some things were already on the modern level. And all this development was engendered by the existence of magic.

After knowing this, Ainz gave up researching the technology of this world. It was impossible to compare a magically-developed world to a scientific one. There was magic to produce salt, sugar and spices, and people also used agricultural spells to restore nutrients to the farmlands instead of implementing crop rotation. Believe it or not, the sea wasn't salty. This intel was completely different from what Ainz took to be common knowledge. Ainz carefully satisfied his curiosity.

After some time: "There's movement." Lukeluther suddenly said tensely. His tone was completely different from the one used when flirting with Narberal. Right now, he looked like a veteran professional adventurer. Everyone drew their weapons and looked in the direction Lukeluther was facing.

"Where?"

"There. Right there." Lukeluther pointed at a corner of the massive forest in response to Peter's question. The visibility was bad with the forest blocking the way, and there wasn't any movement. Even so, no one doubted Lukeluther. "What should we do?"

"Don't force your way. If it stays inside the forest, then let's ignore it!"

"It would be best to stick to the plan and let Nfirea fall back!"

As they were discussing loudly, there was movement in the forest. The monsters showed themselves. Fifteen creatures as tall as children were surrounding six giant beings. The former were the demi-human goblins. Each twisted face had a flat nose, and two sharp fangs protruded from each large mouth. Their skin was dark brown, and their messy black hair seemed to be fixed by hair wax. Their clothes were ragged and looked burnt brown due to either dirt or dye. They wore tanned animal skin on the outside as armor. They had a club in one hand, a small shield in the other.

A cross breed between apes and humans, a monster with a tinge of evil. The giant beings were between 250cm and 300cm. They looked a bit retarded with their jaws sharply protruding out. The bulging muscles on their arms were as thick as trees, and the muscles almost reached the ground since the giants' backs were hunched. Each held a tree trunk with the branches removed and they wore only an untanned animal skin on the waist. They smelled even from this distance.

Their skin, full of warts, was burnt-brown in color. Their thick chests and abdominal muscles seemed rather tough. They looked very strong, like shaved twisted gorillas… Demi-human monsters known as ogres. Almost all the monsters had ragged bags, which appeared to be used for long journeys. The monsters looked at the group while walking onto the plains. Although there was still some distance, hostility emanated from their ugly faces.

"…Their numbers are a bit high. Looks like a battle is unavoidable."

"Yes, you are right. Goblins and ogres will attack when they see a smaller group. Or rather, their intelligence tells them to gauge combat prowess by comparing numbers, which can be a bit of a hassle."

Through experience, Ainz knew that this world was nothing like the game, but he was still sort of perplexed by the fact. Just by observing height and skin color, one could tell that each ogre and goblin had different characteristics, meaning they were individuals. It felt like facing twenty-one different monsters.

"Is reality different from the game?" As if he were entering a zone without any walkthrough and fighting unknown monsters, this encounter reminded Ainz of the feeling he had when battling in Carne village. Ainz mumbled in a voice the surrounding couldn't hear.

"Well then, Momon-san."

"…Oh, what is it?"

"We agreed to each taking half of the enemies we encounter, but what about now?"

"We can't split into two teams and dispatch the attacking enemies?"

"It would be bad if all of them run towards one side. Can Nabe use an area attack like 'Fireball' and wipe them out?"

"I can't use 'Fireball'. My strongest spell is 'Lightning'." Ainz remembered that this was the restriction he gave her. "'Lightning' is a row piercing spell right?"

"In that case, how about we lure them into a row so that she can wipe them out from the side?"

"We will need to construct a line of defense to hold them back…"

"I will take care of that. Can I request everyone to protect Nfirea on the carriage?"

"Momon-san…"

"If a mere ogre troubles me, my bark would be worse than my bite. Please watch me dispose of the ogres with ease." Ainz's confident voice told the Swords of Darkness members that this was the best plan, giving them a sense of security.

"Understood. But we won't watch idly while the enemies attack; we will do what we can to help from the side."

"Do you need support magic?"

"Ah, we don't need it. Friends from the Swords of Darkness, please support your own teammates. "Then we will proceed as you wish. Everyone, if the battle were to commence under these circumstances, since we're near the forest, won't the enemies attempt to flee?"

"How about doing it the usual way? We will pull them further out."

"Let's do that! Since Momon-san will fend off the enemies' attack, what about the ones that sneak past, Peter?"

“I will activate my martial arts skill ‘Fortress’ to keep the ogres in check. Dyne, please stop the goblins. Ninya cast defensive magic on me, then concentrate on casting offensive magic. In addition, even if this might be unnecessary concern, please also pay attention to Miss Nabe’s safety. Lukeluther, take care of the goblins. If any ogres break through, you have to stop them. In this case Ninya will prioritize on cleaning up the goblins.”

Everyone looked at each other and nodded, expressing their comprehension of his instructions. The battle plan was smoothly set; their teamwork was excellent. Ainz was impressed and expressed his approval with a grunt. He was reminded of his Yggdrasil days. Ainz and his comrades repeatedly hunted on the battlefield with perfect teamwork. Pulling, tanking and adjusting the attack target.

Because they were familiar with each other’s ability, they could conduct group battle in such a manner. Ainz was a bit biased, but still confident that cooperation among this small group wasn't easy. The Swords of Darkness wasn’t at their level, but he was able to see a shadow of similarity.

“Momon-san, you need any support aside from magic?”

“No, no need. We two will be enough.”

“That’s really… Very confident.” Peter showed a hint of insecurity in his words. If the ones in charge of the defense line went down, it would lead to a domino effect, causing the entire team to collapse. That should be what he was worried about. After all, this wasn’t a game and their lives were on the line. “You'll see once we start.” Ainz finished the conversation with this sentence.

“Let’s start when you are ready.” Lukeluther pulled the string on his composite longbow until it started to creak. The string made a cracking sound as it propelled an arrow straight out, which landed 10 m from the goblins in the plains. The sudden attack made the goblins sneer at Lukeluther with laughter. They were mocking at the missed shot. The goblins couldn’t hit a target 120 m away either, but they seemed to have forgotten that.

Being attacked and their superiority in numbers caused the violent tendencies of the goblins to swell, and they started to shout loudly, charging at Lukeluther without reservation. The ogres followed behind. They lost themselves in their blood thirst, they neither formed ranks nor put up their shields. Their minds turned blank. Lukeluther smiled after confirming that.

“Watch this—” He shot again when the distance was 90m. His aim was true, and the arrow pierced a goblin’s head. This goblin, located towards the back, staggered a few steps and fell dead. The distance narrowed, but Lukeluther’s bow hand didn’t look tense. He believed that someone would protect him, even if his foe were right beside him.

“Reinforce Armor.” Behind Lukeluther, Ninya casted defensive spells. Hearing the voice of his teammates, Lukeluther nocked another arrow. He shot at the 50m mark, hitting the head of another goblin. At this time Peter and Dyne also started moving. The goblins were nimble, but the ogres had large strides, so their speeds were about the same.

But after sprinting about 100m on the grass plains, the ogres with their powerful legs were in the front, with the goblins behind them. The distance was still a bit too far for a wide area spell to encompass all the monsters. But it was enough, since Dyne’s task was to restrain one of the ogres.

“Nature Bind.” Dyne cast his spell, the grass under an ogre’s feet started wriggling, turning into vines and binding it. The unnaturally tenacious chains of vegetation locked the ogre in place, making it roar in frustration. At this time Ainz casually advanced forward with Narberal behind. Their strides suggested that were taking a stroll rather than intercepting charging monsters.

As the lead ogre approached, Ainz reached behind his back, grabbing the sword hilts. Narberal reached under her cape and drew her sword. Drawing a large arc, two swords appeared before Ainz. The bright light entering their eyes made the Swords of Darkness members gasp. The two swords in Ainz’s hand were flashy and had a length of more than 150cm.

Rather than instruments of war, they looked like expensive works of art. The engraving on the grooves of the swords looked like two intertwined snakes. The tip of the swords spread out like a fan, emitting a cold, sharp radiance. Heroic weapon. The swords in Ainz’s hands were the Celebrated Hero’s Swords.

His figure made the Swords of Darkness party gasp again. If the scene before caused them to be in awe, the current one made them speechless. The longer the sword, the heavier it is. Even a weapon enchanted with weight reduction was not easy to wield. They knew from their short journey so far that Ainz had amazing arm strength, but their common sense was unable to accept that someone could wield such a colossal sword so easily. But… But Ainz was swinging them as if he were holding clubs, that image was truly awe-inspiring.

“Momon-san… Who in the world are you…” Peter spoke on behalf of everyone as he sighed. As a warrior, he understood how much arm strength was needed to use such a powerful technique. He didn’t know how much time he needed to train before reaching such a stage, which shocked him. He knew they were on different levels, but the scene before him still made his legs tremble.

Even the dull goblins were frightened by him, slowing down their reckless pace and made a detour towards Peter and the rest. Only the stupid ogres who were confident in their arm strength charged at Ainz. The distance narrowed and the leading ogre raised its club. The swords in Ainz's hands were huge, but the ogre’s club had a wider attack range.

When the ogre started its attack, Ainz had already stepped into range. His speed was like the wind. He swung the giant sword in his right hand with an even faster speed; the afterimage of a white flash slash seemed to slice through space for a moment. That slash was too imposing, even though it was not directed towards them, the others felt as though they were witnessing death right by their side. He ended it in a single attack.

Ainz shifted his attention from the ogre before him to another ogre. As if waiting for Ainz to leave, the top half of the slashed ogre stayed on for a while before finally falling to the ground; the bottom half was still standing. Blood and organs were exposed to the air, creating a pungent smell, emphasizing the fact that this was no illusion. The downward diagonal slash made a clean cut. They were definitely still in the midst of battle, but both sides stopped moving time seemed to stop as they silently watch this amazing scene. Killing in one blow. Even the bulky body of the ogre couldn’t escape the fate of being slashed in half.

“…Amazing.” Someone grunted softly. The voice was clear in the quiet battle field.
“…Unimaginable. He surpassed mithril rank and reached orichalcum rank… No, could it be adamantite rank?” Slashing in half with a single strike. It wasn't impossible. A few skilled

swordsman or those with powerful magic weapons might be able to do it. But if you wield a two-handed giant sword with one hand, it would be hard to exert the strength that was necessary to slash your enemy in half with a single strike, which was common sense.

Two-handed weapons were meant to be held with two hands. The whole point was to use both the slash's centrifugal force and sword's weight to attack; it wasn't meant to be wielded with only one arm's strength. Hence either Ainz's sword was enchanted with powerful magic, or Ainz's strength in one arm was stronger than a normal warrior using two hands. Or maybe both. Seeing this shocking scene, the ogre unconsciously stopped, made an expression of horror and backed away. Ainz advanced briskly to close the distance.

"What? Not coming?" A calm and soft voice sounded out on the battlefield. Such a simple question was enough to intimidate the ogres, because they had witnessed the difference of power between them. Ainz closed in onto the other ogres at an amazing speed, a speed that someone wearing armor shouldn't possess.

"Waarghh—!" The ogre let out a howl that was a cross between a wail and a shout, raising the club in its hand to face Ainz who was attacking. But everyone knew that was too slow. Ainz swung the giant sword in his left hand horizontally after he got close. The top half of the ogre spun in the air and landed at a different spot from its lower half. That was a horizontal slash, slicing the ogre in half with one strike.

"Momon-san… Is he a monster…?" Stunned once again by the scene before them, no one objected Dyne's speculation. "…And so, the rest…" Ainz took a step forward, the ugly faces of the ogres froze stiff and they backed further away. The goblins that made a large detour around Ainz's defense line attacked Peter and the others. The Swords of Darkness members who were watching the fight reacted to the goblin's attack and started to move.

Peter lifted his broadsword and large shield, taking the dozen or so goblins straight on. He stabbed with his sword and sent the head of the leading goblin flying. Peter dodged the spray of blood and began a melee battle with the goblins. "Take this!"

The goblins bared their yellow teeth and gurgled weird sounds. Peter deftly blocked the goblins' clubs with his shield and used magically reinforced armor to tank the attack from the other goblin, which landed on him with a dull thud.

"Magic Arrow." The goblin that was attempting to attack Peter from behind was hit by 2 magic arrows and fell silently to the ground. Half the goblins surrounding Peter rushed at the other 3 party members, all of them ignoring Narberal who was standing beside Ainz, the whirlwind of death. Putting down the composite longbow, Lukeluther drew a short sword from his waist. Together with Dyne who was holding his mace, they ran in front of Ninya's line of fire with their back towards him.

Lukeluther and Dyne took on 5 goblins together and were well matched. They took down one after the other, but it would take a lot of time from the current situation. Lukeluther had a pained expression as he endured the pain of his arm being hit by a club while stabbing his short sword into the gap of a goblin's leather armor. Dyne took a few punches and his actions slowed, but didn't receive any critical wounds.

Ninya watched over the battle tensely, conserving his magic. Some of the ogres were bound by spells, and Ninya might need to deal with them if the situation changes. Peter was evenly matched with the six goblins he was fighting, an intense battle. They weren't overwhelmed by the eleven goblins because of the goblins' hesitation in their attacks. After witnessing Ainz's incredible one hit kill, the morale of the goblins plummeted, unable to decide between fleeing or continue to fight.

As if he intended to shatter the morale of the goblins, Ainz swung his giant sword. The sound of the wind being sliced was followed by a sound of a heavy thud. Twice in a row. As everyone expected, the body count of the ogres continued to rise. There were only 2 ogres left still clinging on to life, one was bound by grass, the other trembling before Ainz. Ainz's helmet turned towards the last ogre facing him. The ogre seemed to feel Ainz's gaze from the thin slit of the helmet as it dropped its club and ran for the forest with a weird groan. Its speed was faster than its attack just now, but there was no way it could escape.

"Nabe, do it." The cold command was issued, and Narberal standing by behind him nodded slightly. "Lightning." A lightning which violently shook the air burst forth, striking the escaping ogre with the sound of thunder. It pierced through the ogre bound by grass behind it too. Easily finishing off the 2 ogres.

"Run away!"

"Run away, run away!" The goblin who watched this scene in this despair screamed and attempt to escape, but Peter was faster than them. The routed goblins were no threat. The group disposed of the goblins one after another. Ninya who didn't need to conserve mana joined in the attacks too. The Goblins were turned into corpses, none escaped. With the intense smell of the corpses as background, Dyne healed Lukeluther and Peter's injury with 'Minor Heal'. Ninya who was free took out a dagger to cut off the goblins' ears.

Turning in the ears will earn them rewards for the corresponding monsters. Of course, the parts were not always ears, and varies according to the monster. But for demi-humans like ogre and goblins, it was mostly ears. Ninya who was skillfully cutting off the ears saw Ainz and Narberal searching around the ogre, and seemed to be looking for something.

"Is anything wrong?" Hearing Ninya's query, Ainz lifted his head and answered: "Ah, I was thinking… Maybe these monsters will drop items such as crystal."

"…Crystals? I had never heard of ogres possessing jewelry like that."

"That's true. I was wondering if there would be rare items."

"Indeed. It would be nice if the ogres have treasures." Ninya answered as he sliced off the ogres' ear with practiced movements.

"But… Momon-san is really powerful. I knew you are a warrior confident in your own ability, but I didn't know you were that good." When they heard Ninya's words, the 3 who finished healing up said to Ainz: "Amazing! As a fellow warrior, that was awe-inspiring! How did you train that kind of arm strength?"

“I thought that you must be rich since you are with Nabe-chan, but what kind of rare treasure is that sword? I had never seen such a valuable sword.”

“I feel deeply that the words you uttered in the guild were true, you are at the level of the renowned strongest warrior of the kingdom, impressive.” Narberal besides him had a proud expression, but Ainz just kept waving his hands: “That’s too much credit for me, I was just lucky.”

“Lucky…” Peter’s group smiled awkwardly.

“…After this battle, I agree deeply with the saying that there is always someone stronger.”

“Everyone can easily reach my standard someday.” Ainz’s words made their smile turned more awkward. Peter’s group worked hard to become strong and didn't waste the bounties they earned, using it all to strengthen themselves. Because they were comrades like this, everyone maintained a good relationship.

Even when they think back of their effort so far, they can’t imagine reaching the same level as Ainz. For Peter’s party, Ainz position was the absolute peak only a handful of people can reach. This person traveling with them will definitely become a renowned hero, a great man standing at the pinnacle of adventurers. Everyone believed this strongly.

Chapter 2: Journey, Part 2

The group made preparations to set up camp, although it was way before sunset. Ainz held wooden stakes, which had been handed to him, and struck them into the area around the camp. Since it needed to accommodate the entire carriage, the camp had a diameter of twenty meters, a rather large area.

He hammered the stakes into the ground at four different spots and tied thin, black ropes onto them, forming a square. He then tied a knot on the center of the ropes, pulled it to the front of the tents and attached a large bell. This was an early warning net. While Ainz was planting the stakes, Narberal came up from behind him.

…Narberal should be busy with her own tasks… It would be great if she has already finished them, but if she was provoked by Lukeluther again, I'll need to have a word with her… After making his decision, Ainz turned around to look at her, and saw Narberal suppressing her seething emotions as she said in a low tone: "…There's no need to trouble Momon-san with such chores, right?"

Ainz breathed a sigh of relief after learning the reason for her anger. He looked at her and said softly: "Everyone is working hard to make camp, it would be hard to justify if I was the only one idling around, wouldn't it?"

"Didn't you show them your exceptional combat prowess? The job should fit the person, tasks like these should be left to the weaklings."

"Don't say that. Listen, we're making our debut as powerful adventurers, but we don't want to leave the image of being arrogant. You have to be careful in the way you speak and act."

Narberal nodded in acknowledgement, but she looked dissatisfied. She was only doing so because these were Ainz's orders. Considering her expression, her loyalty was clearly suppressing her dissatisfaction. On the flip side, Ainz was worried that this would cause them to make mistakes. He was enjoying the great outdoors. Because he couldn't experience this in the real world or in Yggdrasil, it was refreshing for him. Although it took a lot of time, these outdoor activities reminded Ainz of the adventuring for the unknown back in Yggdrasil.

If the entire Great Tomb of Nazarick hadn't been transported to this world, and I was here by myself, I would probably travel the world. The body of an undead didn't required nourishment or air. He would be able to scale mountains or walk into the deep sea with just his legs. He would enjoy the unknown sights of this world in such a way.

But the treasures left behind by his comrades were now serving him as his loyal subjects, so Ainz felt he should take on his role as Overlord of the Great Tomb of Nazarick to repay their loyalty. Ainz put these thoughts aside and concentrated on the task at hand. After hammering the four stakes adequately into the ground and tightening the ropes, he returned to the tents.

"Thanks for your hard work."

"Don't mention it." Lukeluther didn't look at Ainz when he greeted him. It was a bit rude, but Lukeluther wasn't idling, he was digging a hole for the stove. The magic caster, Ninya was walking around the area, chanting a spell. It was the warning spell, 'Alarm', which would alert everyone whenever anything approached. It couldn't cover a large area, but it was enough as a precaution.

This spell, which didn't exist in Yggdrasil, caused Ainz to squint his eyes. He delegated the task of collecting unknown magic to others, but unknown spells still stimulated the magic caster in him. The spell Ninya activated belonged to a magic system similar to Ainz and was the closest to Yggdrasil spells. Because of his racial passive skill 'Wisdom of Darkness', Ainz was able to increase the number of spells he could learn.

Can I learn magic that didn't exist in Yggdrasil if I conduct rituals with living sacrifices? Or is there some other way? There are so many things to learn… Ninya noticed Ainz staring at him. He wasn't as distant like when they first met, but he still gave an obviously fake smile and walked over: "Ara, don't need to watch so closely. It's not that interesting right?"

"I'm curious about magic and I'm interested in what Ninya-san is doing."

"No way… I am far behind Nabe-san in this."

"But you know magic that Nabe doesn't."

Narberal lowered her head slightly, but Ainz didn't miss that. Despite the faint light, Ainz didn't miss that Narberal lowered her head slightly, looking jealous without a hint of shame. "I want to use magic like Ninya-san too."

"You're greedy, Momon-san. You are so powerful with the sword and still looking to harness the might of magic. No, I should say you have the personality of an adventurer, right?"

"Magic doesn't seem to be something you can learn in a day or two. The first prerequisite is the ability to connect with the world, but only those with potential can do that easily. Others can only understand it slowly with time." Lukeluther was hard at work with the stove and commented without looking up. Ninya's expression turned serious: "Yeah, Momon-san, I think you have the potential. You are not like other people; you have some sort of… Inhuman feel about you."

Ainz felt his non-existent heart skip a beat. Ninya was rather vague, but he seemed to have realized that Ainz was an undead. Although he had used illusion and Anti-Information spells, unknown magic and unique skills might be able to easily see through Ainz true nature. So Ainz cautiously asked: "…Is that so? I think I am strong, but not to the extent of being inhuman. You've seen my face, so you should know that, right?"

"I'm not talking about appearance… After witnessing your strength, I know it was beyond the realm of normal people. Killing an ogre with a single attack… Being human is not about appearance but ability! And you also have a beauty like Nabe-chan with you."

If you thought about Lukeluther's words calmly, he was saying that the illusion of the face that Ainz showed was not good looking. But Ainz could only agree after remembering how the people he met so far looked. *There are too many handsome men and pretty girls in this world. The features of the*

people walking on the streets are great. After coming here, the way I feel about my own face has dropped by two grades.

"Appearance aside, Lukeluther is right. People known as heroes will of course be beyond the realm of common folks. I feel that way too."

"No, you flatter me. Calling me a hero… Is too great an honor for me." Ainz answered Ninya, pretending to be shy while stopping himself from breathing a sigh of relief. "If it is convenient, would you like to meet my teacher? Teacher's innate talent can appraise the magic power of others, if you have the potential for magic, it will be sensed. Teacher can even categorize the tier of magic for arcane magic casters."

"I've always wanted to… That's the same innate talent as that of the best magician in the Empire right?"

"Yes, it's the same innate talent."

Since he couldn't miss this information, he carried on asking. "…What kind of ability is that?"

"Ah, according to teacher, we magic casters have something like an aura around us. The better the magic ability, the more aura there is. My teacher's ability allows the perception of this aura."

"Oh… Oh." Ainz restrained the low moan of surprise that leaked out instantly. In order to avoid the suspicion of others, he grunt in acknowledgement in a normal tone.

"Teacher uses this method to gather talented children and teach them." I was picked up by teacher too, Ninya continued. Ainz tried playing it off as he cursed in his heart. This was bad, someone had such a troubling innate talent. "What's the first step to take in order to learn magic?"

"You need to find a good teacher."

"…Like Ninya-san?"

"Hmmm, it's better to look for someone stronger than me. But the Kingdom mostly teaches through private tutoring, unrelated personnel won't be able to enter a magic guild. Those who do get in without relations are small kids who are still immature. For someone the age of Momon-san, it is hard to enter without special recommendations. As for that, the Empire has a good magic academy, the magic education of the Theocracy is also at a very high standard, but only for divine magic."

"I see, so I can enroll in the Empire's magic academy?"

"I think that would be difficult. The magic academy is a state-owned education institution, so only citizens of the Empire can study there…"

"I see…"

"As for studying under me, I'm sorry. I have things I need to do and have no time to spare teaching others." Ninya's expression darkened. He seemed to be full of intense negative emotions, his hostility was clear for all to see. *Don't get too deep into this. I don't think I will get anything good out*

of it. When Ainz made this judgement, Lukeluther interrupted Ainz's thought with a light tone: "Hey, sorry for butting into your conversation, but the food is ready. Can you help me to gather the other three?"

"Momon-san, let me do that."

"Hmmm, Nabe-chan is going? Not staying here to cook with me, creating our memories of love?"

"Die, lower life form (house centipede). I will pour boiling oil down your throat to stop you from saying nonsense, alright?"

"Stop that Nabe. Let's go together."

"Yes! Understood!"

After thanking Ninya, Ainz walked towards the two men working silently a short distance from the tent. Peter and Dyne were focused on maintaining the weapon they used, applying oil to prevent rust, checking its alignment and other things. The armor had fresh dents and the swords had cracks after clashing with the weapons of the goblins. There was a need to repair these as fast as possible, and Ainz was hesitant about breaking their concentration.

He needed to inform the two of them, as well as Nfirea who was taking care of the horses, that dinner was ready. The sun set beyond the horizon, the group dined with the blood red sunlight as background. Everyone's bowl was filled with bisque seasoned by bacon, toast, dried figs and walnuts. This was the dinner tonight. Ainz stared at the salty looking bisque in his hands. He couldn't feel the warmth while wearing his gauntlets, but seeing everyone eating heartily without waiting for it to cool, the temperature should be just right.

Well, what should I do? Ainz was an undead and therefore unable to eat. He disguised his appearance with an illusion spell but he would be exposed if he ate the bisque with his skeleton body and mouth. He couldn't allow anyone to see his true appearance. An unknown world with unknown food. It might be just a few simple dishes, but Ainz still felt it was a pity that he was unable to eat it. Although he no longer had any desire for food, he still felt discontent about his inability to eat when delicious and curious dishes appeared before him. For the first time since coming to this world, Ainz regretted having an undead body.

"Ah, is there something you don't dare to eat?" Lukeluther asked while looking at Ainz, who wasn't digging in. "No, it's a personal reason."

"Is that so? Don't force yourself alright? But it's chow time now, you can take the helmet off right?"

"…It's because of religious reasons. On the days when I kill, five or more people can't dine together."

"Oh… Momon-san had a strange religion. But since the world is big, it's not surprising for such a religion to exist."

Everyone's suspicious gaze softens when they heard it was related to religion. *Maybe religion is a complicated matter in this world.* Ainz offered thanks to the gods he didn't believe in for successfully

fudging it. To change the topic, he asked Peter: "You call yourself the 'Swords of Darkness', but it seems none of you are using one?"

As for the main weapon of the members, Peter used a normal magically enchanted longsword, Lukeluther used a bow, Dyne used a mace and Ninya had a staff. No one wielded a black sword. Peter's main and Lukeluther's support-weapons were swords, but their color was anything but 'darkness''. There was a technique that changed the color of metal by applying a special powder, so it wasn't hard to forge a black-colored sword. Or rather, it seemed unnatural that nobody used a black sword.

"Ah, it's that question." Lukeluther smiled sheepishly, the smile of someone digging up his shameful past. Especially Ninya whose face turned bright red, different from the reflection of the camp fire. "That was the sword Ninya was after."

"Don't bring it up, I was young back then."

"There's nothing to be ashamed of! Having a grand dream is important!"

"Spare me Dyne, seriously."

The Swords of Darkness group laughed heartily as they mocked Ninya who felt embarrassed enough that he wanted to find a hole and hide in it. The name 'Swords of Darkness' seemed to be an inside secret among members. "The 'Swords of Darkness' were the swords owned by one of the legendary 'Thirteen Heroes'."

Peter said with a smile, but didn't elaborate any further. *That's too vague if he stops here… All I know is that the Thirteen Heroes were heroes on another level that defeated the rampaging Demon God 200 years ago. I have no idea who the heroes were, or what equipment they had… Will not knowing these things cause me to lose face? Or should I pretend to know?*

As Ainz was feeling troubled, Narberal interjected: "What is that?" Awesome. Ainz struck a victory pose in his mind, while the Swords of Darkness members looked stunned. Not knowing about the magic item they named themselves after might be a bit shocking.

"So Nabe-chan doesn't know. That understandable. Although he was one of the Thirteen Heroes, he was branded as a villain because others believed him to be of demonic descent. His part is often omitted when telling the tale of the legendary heroes… He was said to be very powerful."

"The Swords of Darkness were the four swords used by the 'Dark Knight' of the thirteen heroes: The magic sword 'Kilineiram' can emit dark energy, wounds caused by the corrosive sword 'Colocudabar' will never heal, the death sword 'Sufiz' is able to kill with a single scratch and then there's the evil sword 'Hyumilis' whose ability is unknown."

"Oh—" Everyone smiled awkwardly at Narberal's uninterested response. Ainz tilted his head, deep in thought, since the description of these special abilities felt familiar to him. After thinking carefully, the image of a certain vampire popped into his head: These special abilities were similar to Shalltear's Cursed Knight class.

The lore behind the Cursed Knights was that they were cursed paladins, it was a strong job in Yggdrasil, but since it had a lot of shortcomings it wasn't very popular. Some of the skills a Cursed

Knight could learn included emitting a wave of darkness, leaving wounds that couldn't be healed by low-grade healing spells, death curses, and so on.

Ainz squinted his illusionary eyes under his helmet, thinking that this couldn't be a coincidence. The Swords of Darkness might bestow special skills similar to those of a Cursed Knight, but there was a high chance that this hero had been a Cursed Knight. If that was the case, one of the prerequisites for becoming a Cursed Knight was level 60, so the 'Dark Knight' had been at least level 60… No, considering the skills he learned, he had been at least level 70.

The Demon God fought against such a hero, so their levels had to be about the same. But Nigan from the Sunlight Scripture claimed his Dominion of Authority defeated a Demon God, so the Demon God was not as strong as the heroes. Judging from the intelligence he had collected, the most reasonable conclusion was that the Demon God wasn't too strong, but the only way of finding an answer would be obtaining the sword or meeting that hero personally. While Ainz was thinking, the group continued to chat. Ainz hurriedly focus his attention on their conversation in order to not miss any chance of getting more information.

"Finding that is my first objective. There are many legendary weapons. There are some that were proven to exist, but it is unknown if they still exist nowadays—"

"Ah, there is a person who already owns one of the Swords of Darkness." Nfirea casually dropped the bomb, making all the Swords of Darkness members turn to him: "Wh-Who is it!"

"Wah! Really?! That means there are just three left!"

"Eh, now we can't give one to each member…"

Nfirea answered cautiously: "Ehm, there's an adventurer group calling themselves the 'Blue Rose', their captain has the sword."

"Oh, if it's that group of adamantite ranked adventurers, then it can't be helped."

"That's right. But since there are still three swords left, let's work hard and become strong enough to obtain them all."

"You are correct, since there is one, then the other three must exist as well. I hope those three are hidden in a place no one else can find until we discover them."

"Ninya, log this in your diary to avoid forgetting about this."

"Understood, I will pen it down. But that's my private diary, shouldn't you record or remember it yourself?"

"Leaving a physical record behind is good!"

"Is that the issue? Dyne…"

"But we have this."

"What's that?"

"This, Momon-san."

Peter took out a short sword with four small jewels embedded in the hilt. He drew it out to show its black sword body. "Before getting the real thing, we plan to use this as our symbol…"

"Calling ourselves 'Blade of Darkness' instead of 'Swords of Darkness' would be fine. Anyway, there is no real or fake thing, this is undoubtedly the symbol of our team!"

"Eh… Lukeluther is actually talking sense!"

The Swords of Darkness members broke out in laughter, appearing harmonious. Influenced by the atmosphere, Ainz smiled along with them. Their feelings toward the short sword was the same as Ainz's feelings towards the guild's symbolic staff. Topics suitable for dinner conversation popped up one after another, the Swords of Darkness members who were the majority held the initiative, talking to Ainz, Narberal and Nfirea from time to time.

Ainz joined in, but still felt some distance from the Swords of Darkness members. Because Ainz lacked knowledge of this world and was hesitant in his words, that's why he can't mingle well. This resulted in Ainz talking less, forming a vicious cycle. When they talked to Narberal, she would come up with weird answers, so they left her out gradually. Nfirea was handling it well. He had always lived in this world and was more adapt in being with others. He can join in the topic easily and can read the mood too.

No big deal. I had comrades in the past too. Ainz thought in a tantrum as he watched the party chatting happily under the glow of the camp fire. Their relationships are great; this is expected of comrades that face death together. Nfirea had also looked envious as he looked at the team. Ainz also recalled his teammates from the past, grinding his teeth in jealousy under his helmet… He was just like them in the past. "…Your friendships are deep. Are all the other adventurers like this?"

"Probably, they went through thick and thin together as well, if they can't understand what each other were thinking, what actions they will take, it will be dangerous. Over time, their bond will deepen."

"That's right, there are no girls in our team. I heard that it will get rowdy if there is one."

"…That's right."

Ninya continued with an awkward smile: "If there is, Lukeluther would be the first one to cause trouble. Anyway, it's because our party has a definite goal right?" Peter and the others nodded in agreement. "…That's how it is. When everyone is thinking as one, the feeling is different."

"Eh? Momon-san had a party in the past too?" Ainz didn't know how to answer Nfirea, but he didn't need to fudge it with weird excuse.

"We weren't really… Adventurers." As he remembered his comrades in the past, it's understandable for his tone to become heavy. Even though he was an undead, he still had emotions, and his comrades from the past were the people Ainz missed the most. Sensing Ainz had things he did not want to talk about, no one pressed him and the place turned silent. It was so

quiet they seem to be the only ones in the world. Ainz lifted his head gently and look at the night sky full of shining stars.

"When I was still weak, I was saved by a paladin dressed in pure white, who was holding a sword and shield in each hand. He introduced me to 4 other team mates. Including me, we were a 6 men party. Soon after, three other members who were weak just like me joined, and the nine of us founded the original team."

"Oh—" With the crackling sound of the campfire, someone grunted. But Ainz wasn't bothered and continued to remember the 'original nine' of his guild 'Ainz Ooal Gown'. "They were an excellent bunch. Paladin, swordmancer, priest, dark… bandit, dual wielding nin… dual wielding bandit, sorcerer, chef, blacksmith… Irreplaceable good friends. We experienced countless adventures, I still can't forget those days."

Thanks to them, he learned what friends are. He thought he would be ignored in Yggdrasil too, but the reality was different, they were perfect teammates willing to lend a hand. As they slowly increased their members, they experienced an amazing life going through thick and thin. That's why the guild 'Ainz Ooal Gown' was an important treasure for Ainz. Even if he needed to give up everything and destroy the world, he wanted to protect its legacy.

"You will find comrades like them again someday." Ninya's consolation made Ainz lashed out fiercely: "There will never be such a day." His voice was full of hostility. Shocked by his own words, Ainz stood up slowly: "…Excuse me… Nabe, I will eat over there."

"I will join you."

"I see… It can't be helped since it is a religious issue."

Peter felt it was a pity, but didn't persuade him to stay. Even though Ninya looked depressed, Ainz still decided to not say anything to him. Just saying 'I'm not taking it to heart' will be enough. The two of them seemed to be dining at the corner where the ropes were tied. When the person who was here just now, the rest will discuss about him.

Especially since the subject is the focus of attention, it was natural to do so. As their conversation ends momentarily and everyone were silent, the camp fire crackled. Ninya looked at the sparks disappearing and reproach himself: "…I think I said something I shouldn't have."

"Well, we didn't know what happened earlier."

Dyne nodded strongly while Peter continued: "Maybe they were wiped out. People who lost all their comrades in battle will react that way."

"That sort of things… Is unbearable. Even for us who spend our lives on the edge of death, losing companions is still…"

"You are right, Lukeluther. I was careless with my words."

"You can't take back the words you said. So we need to do something for him to change his mind about those words."

Ninya was depressed and mentioned softly: “I know how it feels to lose your companions, why didn’t I put myself in his shoes?” But no one responded to this. In the silence, the firewood crackled and spit out sparks once again. To change the heavy atmosphere, Nfirea cautiously said: “…Momon-san was amazing today.” Waiting for these words, Peter followed up: “Yeah, I didn’t think he would be that awesome. Cleaving the ogre in half with one strike…”

“That was incredible.”

“Defeating an ogre with one attack is amazing, but how skilled is he to cleave it in two with a single hit?”

In response to Nfirea’s baffled question, the Swords of Darkness members looked at each other. The renowned young man Nfirea wasn’t only born with innate talent, he was also an excellent magic caster. He possessed talent that would allow him to shine brightly in the future, but there was no warrior around the same level as him, so it was hard for him to understand just how powerful Ainz was as a warrior.

Peter gave Nfirea a simple explanation: “Normally, huge swords are used to inflict blunt trauma, but he’s actually using them to ‘slice’ his enemies apart. It is hard to cut a bulky guy like that with one hand… But there are exceptions.” Nfirea seemed impressed by Peter’s explanation.

But feeling the impression wasn’t intense enough, so Peter dropped a name for comparison: “Frankly speaking, I think Momon-san is already at the same level as the Kingdom’s Warrior-Captain.” Nfirea opened his eyes wide with shock. He finally understood what level the Swords of Darkness judged Ainz to be at.

“…You mean he is a match for adamantite ranked adventurers… The highest rank of adventurers, living legends and the pinnacle of human strength, right?”

“Absolutely.” Peter nodded gently. Nfirea looked to other members of the Swords of Darkness, they all nod in agreement. Nfirea was speechless. Adamantite was a magical metal created with the most advanced techniques. It was the peak of the pyramid of adventurers and very few in numbers.

Both the Kingdom and the Empire had only two teams who managed to reach that stage. Their abilities reached the highest levels of humanity and they were literally heroes. And Ainz could match people like them. “Amazing…” These words were full of praise.

“In the beginning… When we first met, I was jealous of the flashy full body armor on Momon-san despite him being the lowest copper medal adventurer. But since we witnessed that his power befits the armor, I am convinced that he is worthy of it. He… Momon-san’s full body armor matches his capabilities well. I’m envious of his strength…”

The warrior Peter wasn’t wearing a full body armor, but a weaker equipment known as chain mail. This wasn’t his equipment of choice, but the best armor he could buy with his budget. “It is fine; Peter can surely afford an excellent full body mail in the near future.”

“Yes, if you look forward to that kind of power, you have to work hard towards your goal. You should be grateful of how lucky you are; you can actually reach the goal you want to achieve.”

“Ninya is right, just set Momon-san as your goal and work towards that. We’ll help you, so let’s work hard together.”

“That’s right! Just work hard step by step! Judging from Momon-san’s appearance, he definitely spent a longer time training than you!”

Dyne’s words raised Nfirea’s doubt. “Have you seen Momon-san’s face under his helmet?” Ainz didn’t take off his helmet after meeting Nfirea, even during meals. They didn’t even know how he drinks water. “Yes we did. It was a normal face… But it wasn’t from around here, he has black hair and eyes just like Nabe-san.”

“I see… Did he mention which nation he was from?” The members of the Swords of Darkness looked at each other, feeling that Nfirea was very concerned with this matter. “We didn’t ask with that much detail…”

“Is that so… Ah, no, if he came from a faraway nation, the potions he uses might be different from the ones used in this region. As a pharmacist I am very interested in it.”

“I see… Indeed, he and Nabe-chan seemed to be from the same place, but their appearance differs so widely… He would never be considered as a handsome man. Will anyone like him?”

“Appearance is nothing, since he is so strong there must be plenty of girls falling for him.”

Indeed, strong men were more popular because there were monsters in this world and humanity was considered an inferior race. Stimulated by their instincts, most women would prefer strong men. “Sigh—, won’t my love ever bear fruit…”

“Impossible. It had no signs of bearing fruit at all.” Ninya remembered Narberal’s reaction and replied with an awkward smile. “No such thing. Anyway, I need to chase her. I need to be proactive for it to work. She is a super beauty okay? If she treats me just a little bit friendlier, I will be a winner in life.”

“…She is really beautiful, indeed…” Dyne said with a heavy expression and noticed Nfirea seemed a bit uneasy.

“Nfirea-san, is something wrong?”

“Ah, no. It’s nothing…”

“Eh?” Lukeluther made a sinister smile and said: “Did you fall for Nabe-chan?”

“No way!” Nfirea answered in an unnecessary loud voice hastily. His intense reaction made Peter felt uncomfortable to continue asking and he relaxed the tension: “Lukeluther, that’s too much. Think before you speak.” After Lukeluther apologized sincerely, Nfirea looked troubled, not knowing how to react to the apology: “No, it’s not that. Well… I feel uneasy… Is Momon-san that popular?”

“…Appearance aside, with his strength, the possibility of him being popular is high. And from the looks of his armor and sword, he is probably rich…”

“Ah…” Nfirea looked gloomy, Peter asked with the concern of a senior taking care of his junior: “Is something bothering you?”

Nfirea was hesitant to speak and his mouth opened and shut like a goldfish. Peter and the others didn’t press him; they won’t force him if he doesn’t want to say it. Shortly after, Nfirea steeled himself and opened his heavy lips… “Erm—, because I don’t want the person I like in Carne village to fall for Momon-san.”

Sensing the emotions behind these words, the Swords of Darkness entourage smiled. “Alright then, let big brother teach the young one some tricks—” Peter gave Lukeluther a punch, making him scream weirdly. The Swords of Darkness group ignored his pained expression and continued to console the stunned Nfirea. Under the shine of the campfire, the youth finally smiled.

♦ ♦ ♦

At the same time. The forehead was pierced along with the iron helmet. His comrade shook wildly for a moment before falling like a kite with its string cut. The metal armor made a deafening sound in the dark night. He prayed for someone to hear this sound and rush over, but no one should be stupid enough to do that. This impoverished region was filled with abandoned zones. That was why he met with his client here.

The man glared at the woman before him. But he couldn't hide the fact he was just putting up a brave front. His morale was gone after seeing the woman killed 3 of his companions consecutively with ease. The woman who killed his comrades flicked the short estoc that was dripping blood. The blood splattered in the surroundings, leaving the estoc shining coldly like before.

"Hmm hmm hmm, you are the last one pal." The woman bared her teeth, showing the smile of a carnivore. "You, why are you doing this?" He felt this question was dumb, but the man really doesn't understand why he ended up in this state. The men were not adventurers, they are known as 'workers' or twilight workers, accepting jobs bordering on being criminal, or even committing crime directly. It was possible for others to bear grudges against them, but they had never worked in this city or seen this woman before.

"Ah, why am I doing this? Ara, I just want you pal." Unable to understand the woman, the man blinked for a while and asked: "What, what do you mean?"

"The grandson of that renowned pharmacist is not home right now, I need someone to keep a look out for me and tell me when he returns. I don't want to do something that troublesome."

"Then just make such a request! That's not what you are trying to do!"

These workers were willing to even break the law, so he doesn't understand the reason why the woman wants to kill him. "Ara ara ara, you might betray me."

"If we receive the agreed remuneration, we won't betray you!"

"Hmm? Let's change that a bit okay? I like killing people, I love it and I can't help myself."

"Ah, I like interrogating too", the woman added with a smile. After listening to this abnormal reason, the man made a serious face: "What the hell is wrong with you?!"

"What exactly is the reason? Because I had to keep killing for my job? Because I was always compared to my excellent big brother? My parents devoted all their love to him? Or perhaps because I was toyed with before becoming strong? Maybe because after messing up and getting captured, I was interrogated for days? Having to eat a scorching pear is really painful, yo."

Before him was just a young girl. But that vanished in an instant and the woman smiled again: "Just kidding, all of that was a lie. Fake, fake~ I didn't experience any of that. But even if everything was true, knowing the past won't change anything. I turned out like this because of accumulated experiences~. Ara~, speaking of which, this is thanks to Kaji-chan collecting intelligence for me, allowing me to contact you guys immediately~. You know how long it takes just to find help these days."

From her hand she released her estoc, letting it fall. It stabbed deep with the aid of only gravitational acceleration. This sharpness meant the estoc wasn't made of mere steel. "This is

orichalcum. Or to be more exact, its mithril covered with orichalcum. It's amazingly good stuff." Having such a rare weapon proved the strength of this woman, which meant he had no chance of winning.

"Now then… Time for the next step. If you get heavily injured, pal, you won't be of use… But no matter how much I hurt you, Kaji-chan can mend you with divine spells… This means I can enjoy torturing endlessly?" As the woman said something creepy, she took out another estoc from under her robes.

"Using this should be good… Sorry if I miss—" The woman stuck out her tongue and apologized, looking really cute. But her heart was still clearly black. The man turned his back to the woman and sprinted. Although he heard the sound of the woman pretending to be surprised, he just focused on escaping. In the darkness without light, he ran with the sense of direction he was so proud of.

But with a cracking sound, the calm and cruel voice of the woman came from behind: "…Too slow." His shoulder felt an intense burning pain. Thinking he was hit by the estoc, his mind was covered by a shadow… Mind control. The man resisted with all his might, but the shadow intensified. The sound of a friend came from behind. "Ara~. Are you okay? Is the wound deep?"

"Yeah, it's no big deal." The man turned and smiled at his friend. The woman made a scary smile upon hearing this.

Chapter 2: Journey, Part 3

Setting off at sunrise, the group followed a road hidden by the grasslands. “We will reach Carne village before long.” Hearing that from within his group, Ainz has also been here before, but on the surface only Nfirea has been here before, all of his travel companions nodded in unison. Other than that they didn’t have any other reaction, they just walked quietly. Nfirea, the one who spoke also had an impatient expression. There was an exceptionally awkward atmosphere between them. The one who created this atmosphere, Ainz, hid his mood under his helmet.

Ninya kept on looking at him with eyes of disdain, but this was his own fault, so he could not say anything. This was also influenced by yesterday’s speech. He apologized to everyone during breakfast, it should have been easy to forgive at that point, but he was unable to say the simple words “I forgive you”. Although Ainz knew he was being petty, he was unable to let it go.

Even after turning into an undead, which changed both my body and my mentality, I’m still like this…
After turning into an undead, all of his stronger emotions would be dampened, but all his weaker feelings wouldn’t disappear completely. The fact that his petty anger was still around after such a long time was proof of this. His past companions had an important place in his heart. Although they were deep feelings, it would be slightly bad if he continued this way, but right now he had no intention of being the one to change the mood.

Being aware that his feelings were like that of a child throwing a tantrum, Ainz was angry with himself for his childish behavior. Within this awkward atmosphere there was only one exception, Narberal, who was walking next to Ainz. Because she hadn’t been harassed by Lukeluther, she was happy enough to start humming. With that, the group quietly walked forward, quickly arriving on the outskirts of Carne village. “W-Well! The view here is so vast and open, perhaps we don’t need to march in formation—”

Lukeluther deliberately said so. Looking to one side, only a vast green forest could be seen, casting some doubt on his statement. Also, it was part of the basics that one shouldn’t let his guard down even in open areas, so it would be wise to keep walking in formation even now. It was just that everyone knew the reason they were silently walking like this wasn’t because of the vigilance required by adventurers. “…It is very important to stay vigilant. Just like this… Eh, let’s just proceed to the village.”

“Of course! In order to avoid being attacked, it is important to keep alert at all times!” Even Peter and Forest Druid Dyne replied in succession, Lukeluther also gave off an expression that said “Not about that”. “Maybe a dragon will fly here from a faraway place and attack us.” Ninya also said. Hearing those words, Lukeluther quickly responded: “What kind of weird development is that? Use your common sense, how could that kind of thing happen, Ninya!”

“Of course it is impossible. It’s only a rumor that there are dragons on the outskirts of E-Rantel. I heard that in ancient times, there were dragons that could freely manipulate the weather, but I have never heard of anyone seeing a dragon recently. Ah, no… Recently I’ve heard that Frost Dragons were seen near the Azellerisia Mountains, but that was really far to the north.”

In ancient times? Considering what the men from the Sunlight Scripture have said, dragons are the strongest race of this world… In Yggdrasil, dragons were also considered the strongest enemy race. Not only do they have powerful physical attack power, physical defense and endless stamina, they were also able to use numerous special abilities and magic. They had already reached a special level. Yggdrasil had many different types of monsters, among them were named monsters along with regional monster chieftains and they also had very strong World class monsters. Even if six teams consisting of six members each were to fight against these monsters, their chances of success would be very low.

Other than the boss who appeared at the end of the main-story, "Devourer of the Nine Worlds", there were still the "Eight Dragons", the "Seven Demon Kings of Sin" and the "Ten Great Angels of the Tree of Life". The expansion "Valkyrie's Downfall" also introduced new bosses, the "God of the 6th Day" and the "Five Rainbow Buddhas". Altogether, there were thirty-two level-breaking monsters. Some of these bosses were from the dragon race, which showed the preferences of the developers. *If dragons really exist, then I must be extra careful. In Yggdrasil, dragons were a race with indeterminate lifespan, so meeting a dragon with power beyond imagination wouldn't be strange.*

"Ah, if you don't mind me asking, but what's the name of the dragon who's able to change the weather?" Ainz wasn't shameless enough to calmly ask something of the person he had a quarrel with, so he quietly whispered. But it was still loud enough to catch everyone's attention, so Ninya quickly turned his head around. They were acting like a quarrelling couple, Ainz wanted to use that question as a chance to reconcile with Ninya. Ainz could not resist thinking about the scene he saw in a coffee shop in the past to compare with this situation.

Having said that, since it was Ainz who asked the question, Ninya showed a small, cheerful expression. The members of the Swords of Darkness and Nfirea smiled as well and only Narberal was unmoved. Speaking of which, ever since this morning, Narberal didn't even notice the awkward atmosphere between those two. "Terribly sorry! Once we've returned to the city, I will look that up!"

No, there is no need to be so excited… Just saying that you don't know is good enough… I only wanted an answer… Just that he did not say those words. "Eh, in that case Ninya-san, if time permits, would you please help me check it out?"

"I understand, Momon-san!" Everyone nodded in satisfaction, making Ainz feel embarrassed. The situation would be different if it was the other way round, but being oldest person in the group he couldn't help feeling ashamed. "Alright, we should be arriving at Carne village soon…"

This would be the first cheerful thing he said all morning, but suddenly Nfirea went silent. Everyone started to look at the village as it gradually got into their sights. It was a simple village that was situated next to a forest. No strange atmosphere could be felt from it and there was also nothing of interest, so nobody knew why Nfirea suddenly stopped talking.

"What's wrong, Nfirea-san? Did something happen?"

"Ah, never mind. It's just that this sturdy fence wasn't here before…"

"Is that so? But looking at it, there doesn't seem to be anything special about it at all. To be honest, this kind of defense is a bit shabby for a frontier village, isn't it? This village is located next to the

forest, so they probably use it to stop monsters. It wouldn't be strange if there was an even stronger fence, right?"

"Eh—, what you said may be true… But Carne village was protected by the Virtuous King of the Forest, they never needed a palisade before…" They all looked at the village. From what they could see, the village was completely surrounded by the walls, some of them were even fashioned from wood that would break easily.

"How strange indeed… What happened here…" Even after hearing the young man's uneasy questions, Ainz still didn't say anything, because the last time he visited the village it was as the magic caster 'Ainz Ooal Gown', and right now he was the adventurer Momon.

Ninya interrupted with a serious face: "Maybe I'm worrying too much… But I clearly remember the village from the last time I came here, and I noticed two very suspicious differences. One is that even now I don't see anyone working in the fields and the other one is that some of the wheat has already been harvested."

Looking towards the direction Ninya was facing, they could clearly see that parts of the wheat fields had already been harvested. "I see. In that case… What exactly happened here?" Ainz with an uneasy expression said to everyone: "…Everyone, please leave this to us. Nabe, please use your flight magic to survey the village." After listening to Ainz's instructions, Nabe activated her concealment magic and disappeared. Following that, Narberal finished chanting her flying magic, then no trace of her was left behind.

Everyone waited on the road, when Narberal's figure suddenly reappeared in the same place and she gave her report: "…The villagers are moving normally within the village and it doesn't look like they are under orders or commanded by someone. There's also another field on the other side of the village where the villagers are currently working at."

"…Well, looks like I was just too worried."

"There shouldn't be any problems then. In that case, we should continue… Right?"

Peter looked for Nfirea's and Ainz's opinions, who both agreed. Since the road to the village became narrower and narrower, the group formed a single column and walked to the entrance of the village. The wheat fields scattered on both sides of the road swayed in the wind and dyed the wheat green. From their point of view, it looked like they were immersed in a green pond.

"Eh?" The carriage was rattling forward when Lukeluther, who was second in line, suddenly spoke in a puzzled voice and carefully looked at the wheat fields. Even though it wasn't harvest time yet, the wheat stalks still reached a height of seventy centimeters, making it difficult to look into the sea of wheat. "What's wrong?" Ninya, who was walking behind him, asked with a perplexed voice. "Eh? Nothing, maybe it's just my imagination?" Lukeluther's head was full of doubts, but he increased his pace and quickly closed the distance between him and Peter.

Ninya also looked in the same direction, confirming there was no movement and then moved forward quickly. The wheat even grew onto the road to the village, making it look like it had been flooded by the sea. For the sake of creating a path they considered cutting down the wheat, but

doing so would surely get them into trouble. “I really hope that the villagers will properly tend these fields. Leaving it like this would be too wasteful.”

Peter, who was walking in front of them, knocked over many ears of wheat when his thigh armor grazed them. Seeing that, Peter muttered to himself, feeling that something was off about the situation. His intuition, which had been honed through countless dangerous situations, was warning him.

Would green ears of wheat really fall over this easily? Looking carefully at the fields, Peter realized there was a pair of eyes staring straight into his. There was a small creature that could hide their whole body inside the wheat field. Although he couldn’t make out the facial features that were hidden by the wheat, they were definitely not human.

“What!” Surprised, Peter wanted to shout a warning to his fellow comrades, but the creature, a demi-human, spoke first: “Could you lay down your arms?” The short demi-human had already drawn its weapon, no matter how fast Peter could move, his opponent would still be faster. “Oh-oh, please lay down your weapons. Could you please convey this message to the people behind you? We do not wish to use these bows and arrows to kill you.”

Hearing a soft sound coming from another place, he looked in that direction and discovered a cleverly hidden hole in the fields from which the upper halves of some demi-humans could be seen. They were also using the wheat to camouflage themselves. Peter could not help feeling hesitant. According to what this creature was saying, it looked like there was room for negotiation.

“…Could you spare our lives?”

“Of course. If you surrender.” Peter was at a loss. He had to stand in front of the carriage and ensure that none of the arrows would reach Nfirea on the carriage. He also had to grasp the numbers of the enemy and the composition of their troops. It was important to confirm his opponent’s objective, but right now he could neither surrender nor reject his opponent’s proposal. As if they were able to see through Peter’s confusion, two additional demi-humans stood up with a rustling sound. “…Goblins.” Ninya whispered.

The demi-humans who just stood up were of the same race as the goblins from yesterday. They raised their bows and arrows, targeting with their sharp eyes. Should they fight? Ninya, Lukeluther and Dyne looked at each other, using their expressions to read each other’s intentions.

Compared to humans, goblins were weaker in terms of height, weight, muscle and other physical abilities. Since they had night vision, it would be difficult to fight them in the dark, but if it was under the sun in broad daylight, they wouldn’t be a difficult opponent for the battle-hardened members of the Swords of Darkness…

Furthermore, there was Ainz as well, so the fight should be as easy as yesterday’s one. If it was a fight against goblins, Peter was confident he would win, even if he had a hostage to rescue. But there were other reasons Peter was unable to act decisively. In simple terms, the goblin in front of him looked well-trained.

Compared to the weak and gaunt goblins from yesterday, the goblin in front of him had a good physique, a body with sturdy muscles. Not only that, the way the goblin was holding its bow was

also very good. Yesterday's goblins looked like children waving sticks around, but the goblin in front of him looked like a soldier familiar with the bow.

And finally, its weapons looked well cared for, comparable to the weapons of the members of the Sword of Darkness. Since humans can train to become stronger, obviously even monsters can do so as well. Naturally the same applies to goblins. Therefore, the goblins in front of him could very well be much stronger than any of the previous demi-humans the Swords of Darkness had fought before. Then a different voice blew down with the wind past the wheat fields, Lukeluther hurried looked to the rear.

"…Hey, hey, have we already been found out?" A goblin lifted his face out of the field, sticking his tongue out. It was possible that it wanted to sneakily attack from behind but didn't have good enough sneaking skills to fool the ranger Lukeluther. Even though he had noticed the goblin, it didn't improve their situation at all. Calmly looking around, they noticed that the fields were full of movements, looking as if there were still things hidden inside.

All of them seemed to move towards the carriage, slowly closing the encirclement. They were in an extremely disadvantageous position. The members of the Swords of Darkness could no longer think of a way out of this dilemma. Ainz used his hand to stop Narberal, who was going to slaughter all of them, and after observing the goblins he confirmed that his guess was correct. *These are the goblins and goblin archers summoned by the 'Horn of the Goblin General'.*

If these goblins were under the control of the girl he gave the item to, then they should avoid any hostile action. They should think of some countermeasures, but since they were no match for Ainz or Narberal, there shouldn't be a problem. Looking at the calm and easy-going Ainz, the goblins said: "That man wearing the full body armor, if possible please do not act rashly. We do not wish to fight."

Ainz once again stopped Narberal's actions and with a guarded and stiff voice he said: "Don't worry, if you don't attack us, we won't move as well."

"I thank you. These guys may be strong, but they aren't really scary… You on the other hand, along with the lady next to you… My instinct tells me it would be terrible if the two of you become my enemies." Ainz didn't speak up, but shrugged in answer. "Please wait here for a moment until elder sister comes over…"

"Who is this elder sister you speak of!? Is it that person occupying Carne village!?" Nfirea's agitated shout surprised the goblins. "Nfirea, calm down. I don't need to tell you has the upper hand right now. Looking back at what Narberal has said about the village, there are still some strange areas. So before we know more about the situation, I hope we can avoid any unnecessary conflict."

Although he had heard Ninya's advice, Nfirea could not conceal his anxious mood. Only that his face showing his determination to fight to the death, turned into a face of discontent, his clenched fists slowly relaxed. Seeing such drastic changes in Nfirea, Ainz felt both surprised and confused.

Of course, since it was just a short journey he didn't know everything about the youth's personality, but even then he didn't think his reaction would be that extreme. Maybe this village was more to him than just a place he got his herbs from. Feeling suspicious, Ainz looked at the

youth. The goblins on the other hand felt Nfirea's anger, and were looking at each other with puzzled expressions.

"Eh… This feels different from before…"

"Elder sister's village was recently attacked by Knights of the Empire; we are just being careful."

"The village was attacked…! I hope she's fine!" Seemingly responding to Nfirea's cry, a girl under the protection of the goblins appeared at the village entrance. Seeing the girl, Nfirea opened his eyes wide, shouting the girl's name loudly: "Enri!" Hearing his shout, the young girl also replied with a voice that sounded like they were good friends, full of kindness and warmth: "Nfirea!" At this point Ainz thought about what he heard before. "A-hah, her pharmacist friend… Wasn't a woman, but a man."

Interlude

Demiurge was walking on the ninth floor of the Great Tomb of Nazarick. His shoes clopped on the floor, making a “da da da” sound, the echoes of which faded into silence. Although a number of servants were on duty as a precaution against an invasion, that still didn’t harm the mythic atmosphere. Demiurge looked around, a smile appearing on his face.

“How glorious and majestic.” He was admiring the ninth floor in all its majesty. He admired the scenery here because the scenery and the 41 Supreme Beings complimented each other well, to the extent that it was worth Demiurge pledging his life to protect this floor. That's why he was fond of the scenery.

Every time he walked on the ninth floor, he would be filled to the brim with joy and would vow once again to devote himself to the creators. This sentiment applied not only to him but also to the boisterous clowns and musicians. Whenever they treaded on this floor, they would also be filled with awe, doing their best to not utter any sound that would disrupt the tranquility.

If anyone disliked this scene, they were either disloyal to the 41 Supreme Beings or harbor ‘thoughts of disloyalty’. Demiurge turned the corner as he thought about that, his destination right before him. That was the room of the last Supreme Being in the Great Tomb of Nazarick, their Overlord Ainz Ooal Gown. When the door was within sight, he saw some people opening the door and exiting. They seemed to notice Demiurge too as they waited respectfully for them to draw close. One of them was dressed like a butler, dressed entirely in black except for his white gloves. But instead of a butler, he looked more like a combatant.

He was one of the ten male servants in Nazarick. But even Demiurge was unable to differentiate which of the ten servants he was. This was because all of them wore masks covering their entire head, and they could only utter weird noise. And there was that thing standing before the male servant. The strange thought of ‘naked with tie’ emerged in Demiurge’s mind. That was a penguin. Its appearance was totally that of a penguin and it was wearing a black tie.

“Long time no see, assistant butler.” When it heard Demiurge’s warm greeting, the penguin smiled cheerfully, it seemed to be doing that, and it returned the greeting: “It’s been a while, Demiurge-sama.” It bowed deeply. Of course, this was no simple penguin, but the assistant butler of Great Tomb Nazarick. A heteromorphic race birdman known as Eckleya Eckleyer Eeckleya.

Birdman should normally be similar to the Peroroncino of the 41 Supreme Beings and possess wings and the head of beast, their limbs should be similar to the talons of birds too. But this man had the appearance of a penguin for some reason. But Demiurge wasn’t fazed by his appearance. Because he was undoubtedly the creation of the 41 Supreme Beings.

“Is Albedo inside?”

“Yes, Albedo-sama is in there.” With Ainz away, Albedo was in charge of the Great Tomb of Nazarick. But she didn’t work in her own room, shutting herself in this one instead, something

everyone knew. All of her actions were permitted by Ainz, so the only one who might protest would be Shalltear Bloodfallen who was away.

Demiurge told Albedo 'Shouldn't a good wife wait for her husband and take care of their home?' She answered 'There's nothing wrong with a wife guarding her husband's room', and Demiurge couldn't retort. Demiurge nodded to express his acknowledgement asked Eckleya: "How rare to see you here. Isn't your work place in the guest room?"

"With Sebas-sama away, I have to work doubly hard in his place too. I was discussing the division of tasks with Albedo-sama in detail."

"That is true. With him away, the 9th floor of the Great Tomb of Nazarick will be in your hands."

"Absolutely right, in order to rule the Great Tomb of Nazarick in the future, now is the time to work hard." Even though some strange words were uttered before him, Demiurge was still smiling. It was common knowledge that Eckleya was eyeing the throne of Nazarick. This was part of the 41 Supreme Beings' creation, so there was no problem with this. Demiurge would dispose of him mercilessly if the Supreme Beings commanded it, but there were no problems before that.

"That's right, work hard. So what do you plan to do first?"

"Cleaning. Are there any other chores? No one can clean better than me! You can even lick the toilet bowl after I cleaned it." Hearing Eckleya's confident reply, Demiurge nodded with satisfaction: "Wonderful. You have a very important job. If this floor becomes dirty, it would be an insult to the Supreme Beings." Demiurge who was nodding raised another query: "I know your work are of the utmost importance, but who is taking care of this floor in place of Sebas?"

"That's the job of the Head Maid Pestonya. Compared to cleaning, management is no big deal."

"I see… The servants created by the Supreme Beings have been delegated corresponding tasks… Speaking of which, isn't it hard to clean with your penguin hands?"

"I can overcome this pair of hands and clean deftly with my skills."

Eckleya puffed out his chest and replied confidently, but he continued speaking with a hint of displeasure: "By the way, Demiurge-sama, this doesn't seem like a question a person whose intelligence was just beneath me will ask." Eckleya took the comb handed to him by the male servant behind and started grooming the golden feathers on the side of his head. "I am not a simple penguin, but a rock hopper penguin created by Ankoro Mochimochi-sama. Please don't get that wrong. And this is not a hand, it's a wing."

"Pardon me." Seeing Demiurge bowing in apology, Eckleya didn't take the matter to heart, turning around to order the male servant: "Carry me there."

"Eeek~!" Eckleya was carried under the male servant's armpit. Because Eckleya moved in shuffling steps, it was rather slow. So he was carried by the male servants normally. "I will bid my leave, Demiurge-sama."

"Yes, farewell Eckleya."

After glancing at the assistant butler being carried under the arm like a soft toy, Demiurge knocked the door gently. Naturally, the owner wasn't in, but Demiurge still acted respectfully. For Demiurge, this room is a place that deserved respect. Demiurge entered the room that didn't gave him any response. After looking around, he didn't see Albedo. Demiurge sighed, open another door and entered the interior room.

The rooms of the 41 Supreme Beings were designed in the image of a presidential suite, with a large bath, bar counter, living room with a piano, master bedroom, guest room, kitchen for personal chefs, walk in wardrobe and many other rooms. Demiurge head for the master bedroom without hesitation. He didn't wait for a response after knocking and opened the door. There was a bed in the room, but its large size was extravagant. A lump slightly bigger than a person was squirming under the covers.

"Albedo." Demiurge called out in irk. A beautiful face emerged, her bare shoulders could be seen and she was probably naked. Her face was pink with excitement probably because she was squirming inside the covers. "…What are you doing here?"

"I want Ainz-sama to be surrounded by my scent when he returns." Her squirming actions was probably to leave behind her scent. Demiurge was dumbfounded, looking silently at the highest ranking NPC, the overseer of the Grand Tomb of Nazarick. He then shook his head weakly. He didn't say 'Ainz-sama is an undead, he probably doesn't sleep in bed.' or 'Even if he does, the bed sheets would be changed immediately.' If this was enough to satisfy Albedo, then let her be.

"But don't go overboard."

"…I don't know how much would be overboard, but I have taken note. Right, Ainz-sama." Demiurge was stunned beyond words. He thought it was Ainz Ooal Gown for an instance, but it lacked depth and the presence. "Is that… A hug pillow of him… Who made it?"

"I made it myself." The fast reply made Demiurge slightly opened his eyes that seemed to be always closed. He didn't think Albedo had such skills.

"Be it cleaning, laundry or sewing skills, I am at the level of professionals." Pleased to see the shocked expression of Demiurge, Albedo boasted delightfully: "For the child that might be born in the future, I had made clothes and socks. All the way till 5 years old." Albedo was all smiles, her "fufufu" laughter made Demiurge feel weak, thinking of just leaving this woman here and leaving right away. "Either boys or girls would be fine… Ah! What about dual sex or sexless?"

Demiurge had nothing to say, looking at Albedo chattering away. Albedo was excellent in managing the Grand Tomb of Nazarick, surpassing Demiurge by leaps and bounds. However, she wasn't as well versed on the military aspect, so Demiurge's aid was necessary. But without any clear enemies, there should be no problem. Demiurge suppressed his unease after judging so. His master ordered him to leave for a mission, so Demiurge can't protest.

"By Ainz-sama's command, it is about time for me to set off. Of the Guardians left in Nazarick, only you and Cocytus are free to act. I don't have anything else to advise you, please be careful."

"After Aura, Mare, Sebas and Shalltear, so you are next. Yes, leave it to me, I will ask my little sister for help in a pinch. I will activate the Pleiades too, so I will definitely hold until everyone returns."

"…Even in the event of an emergency, you can't mobilize your sister without Ainz-sama's permission. The Pleiades are the same. Two of them are out, so you can't gather all of them. You might want to move Victim to the higher floors if the situation warrants it?"

"Something of that extent… I have made preparation to handle that. I will summon you back if there is a crisis. By the way, how do you plan to deal with the survivors of the Sunlight Scripture? Ainz-sama had given the green light for you to manage them right? You can leave them with me too, but I have no idea what you were doing…"

"Ah, you mean them? I am conducting experiments by Ainz-sama's orders." Demiurge was smiling happily, making Albedo frown her beautiful eyebrows.

"First would be healing magic experiment. If you cut off an arm and cast healing on the wound, the arm that was cut off would disappear. What happens if you let them eat the arm that was cut off and cast healing, would the nutrition disappear? If we repeat this indefinitely, will the one eating starve to death?"

"Ah—, I see."

"Not just that, I let them vote to choose the one to become food, the one to cut off the limbs with a blunt axe. The votes are not anonymous."

"Is there any meaning in doing that?"

"Of course. There will be a ranking among the prisoners, those who are eaten, those cutting off the limbs and those who eat the limbs. The comrades will in turn bear grudges. We will then gently incite those who are eaten. This will make them revolt, the results are clear. Living beings that hate everything are scary."

"…How discomforting. The beings in Nazarick are created by the Supreme Beings and would never betray Ainz-sama. But humans will turn against their master… They have no loyalty."

"That's why it is interesting. Do enjoy this part of humans, Albedo. Just treat them like toys and you will be fine."

"I totally don't understand your thinking."

"Such a pity. Alright, chatting here all day will delay the execution of Ainz-sama's orders. If something happens, notify me and I will rush back immediately."

"Yes, but such things shouldn't happen. I will notify you if there is a need."

"I will take my leave then. Oh right… Since you are making clothes for boys, I should inform you earlier. The Supreme Beings seem to prefer young boys wearing girl's clothing's alright?"

"…Eh?"

第三章 森林賢王

Chapter 3: Virtuous King of the Forest, Part 1

Clementine returned to Khajit's secret shrine base situated under E-Rantel's cemetery. She was practically burning with anger. Her steps were rushed, her eyebrows were frowning and her mouth was crooked. Her fine features were twisted into an ugly mess. Her personality was probably uglier than that. Khajit mumbled in his heart, commanding his newly created zombies to the undead holding area.

"Oh~? New zombies? That's over 150, the Pearl of Death is exceptional indeed~." Using the 3rd tier undead creation spell 'Create Undead', the number of undead that can be controlled was dependent on the magic caster's ability. The stronger the undead, the smaller the number that can be controlled. But for low-tier undead like zombies, Khajit who was unbelievably skilled in undead control could command more than one hundred of them. As for why Khajit was able to do this, it was all thanks to the item he owned, the Pearl of Death.

"The problem is that you like to play so much."

"Sorry~" The bowing Clementine had no hint of regret on her face. "But~… Those fellows who die so easily are at fault~. They can't even take that much~."

"…The way you beat them up, anyone would die easily…"

"Adventurers don't die so easily~"

"They are just normal people… They will die since they are not adventurers… Clementine, is saying obvious things to pass the time one of your hobbies?"

"Alright, alright~ Sorry~ I won't do it again, please forgive me!"

Khajit clicked his tongue: "I don't believe you, just stop kidnapping people for now."

"Yes~" Her casual response made Khajit frown. But since saying anything more was useless, he stopped lecturing her. He showed his strong displeasure with a frown, which was ignored as usual. "But~ I am so bored~ By the way, where did he go?"

"He is not back?"

"Not yet, I came back empty handed again~ Now's a good chance, how about nabbing the granny~?"

"Don't be rash. Don't underestimate the granny, she can use 3rd tier spells and is famous in this city. It will be trouble if we make a move on her lightly."

"Eh~ But~"

Khajit reached into his robes and grab a black jewel: "…Clementine, in order to turn this city into the realm of the dead, I have spent years making preparations. I don't want your silly games throwing my plans into disarray. If you keep stirring up trouble… I will kill you, understood?"

"…It's called the Spiral of Death, isn't it?"

"That's right, the ritual our master is executing."

In places where undead gathered, it was possible to create stronger undead. If strong undead were gathered, it became possible to create even stronger undead. The magic ritual exploiting this spiral-like property, which endlessly allows to create even stronger undead and was able to destroy a whole city, was known as the 'Spiral of Death'.

In the past, this evil ritual turned a city into the realm where the undead roams. Khajit's goal was to turn E-Rantel into the 2nd undead city, harnessing the power of death in the city to turn himself into an undead. He had put in a lot of effort and preparation to reach this goal; he wouldn't allow the woman who appeared a few days ago to derail this plan.

"You understand?" Khajit saw right through Clementine's cute puffed up cheeks and sensed her cruel expression. In that instant, Clementine's killing intent burst out like a gust of wind. She closed the distance, striking with amazing speed. The sharp short sword shone as it stabbed towards Khajit's throat—

The weapon Clementine used was a piercing weapon known as a stiletto. Piercing weapons were limited in their ways of attacking and hard to wield. But Clementine liked this type of weapon, so she trained her muscles, picked her equipment and learnt the techniques. All this was in preparation to kill with one hit.

After developing this skill, Clementine survived countless battles against men and monsters, and reached a state where it was impossible for normal people to dodge her. Clementine had innate talent and incredible potential, so it was natural for her to reach such a state after spending most of her life learning this skill. But her target was no pushover either.

The pride of Zuranon, Khajit of the 12 Disciples wouldn't die just like that. The unavoidable tip of the sharp blade was blocked by a white wall that erupted from the ground. It was a claw made from countless human bones, the claw of a lizard. The claw moved and cracked the ground around it. This huge object appeared to be controlled by Khajit's will. He felt the presence of a powerful undead by his feet.

Feeling quite satisfied, Khajit glared at Clementine: "What a meaningless attack. The only harm you've done was to distract me enough to lose control over the undead for a moment."

"Eh~ Sorry about that~ but I didn't even use my full power. You had to use all your strength to block that blow, right?"

"Don't talk nonsense Clementine. You are not someone who will hold back."

"Wah~ you saw right through me? Yeah, if you didn't block it, your shoulder would had been stabbed. But I wasn't planning to kill you~. Honestly." Seeing the woman before him smiling, Khajit frowned.

"And I can still defeat that thing~. It might have a chance against magic casters, but as a warrior I should be more than enough, right? It's just that I'm no good with blunt weapons~"

"…You might be strong against living beings with your one hit kill technique, but how would you fare against undead that don't have vitals? Do you really think this is my final trump card?"

"Hmmm~… You are right~"

Clementine gazed towards the passageway, apparently sensing the undead controlled by Khajit who were waiting inside. "I should be able to deal with a few of them… But under these circumstances it will turn into a war of attrition and I'll probably lose~ Sorry Kaji-chan."

Clementine moved the weapon she was holding in her hand back under her cloak and the earth stopped trembling. "But~ as expected of enhanced undead control~, that was impressive!" Clementine turned and walked away after saying that: "Oh yah. I won't touch the granny until the very end. I won't nab anymore people, that should do, right?"

"…Yes." Khajit would never relax the power in his hands before Clementine was gone. Even when her figure disappeared down the exit of the underground shrine.

"Madwoman." With these words, Khajit finished their conversation. He was flawed as well, but not to Clementine's extent. "What an incredible strength… No, it's because of her incredible strength that her personality became so twisted." Clementine was strong, even among the twelve highest-ranking members of their secret organization, only three were able to defeat her. Regrettably, Khajit wasn't counted among them. Even if he used his special item, he would only have a 30% chance of winning. "The former ninth seat of the Black Scripture, huh… A psychopath with the strength of a hero is not to be trifled with."

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"So something like that happened." Nfirea sighed deeply and muttered. Nfirea knew Enri's parents well. They were ideal parents. He envied the two daughters they doted on. Nfirea was orphaned from a young age and only had vague memories of his parents. Whenever wonderful parents were mentioned, Nfirea would think of Enri's parents. He felt anger against the 'imperial knight imposters' who took the lives of Enri's parents.

He thought they deserved it when he heard they were killed. He was angry at the higher ups of E-Rantel for their unwillingness to dispatch soldiers. But the one who should be the angriest and sad, Enri, put her own feelings aside, which felt a bit strange. He watched as Enri recalled the past, uncertain if he should console her or not, she wiped away the tears in her eyes and smiled: "I still have my little sister, so I can't stay depressed like this."

Nfirea, who had been about to get up, sat down again. He thought it was regrettable having lost his chance to console her, but he also thought himself to be really useless. But… His feelings of wanting to protect her remained the same. After hesitating, Nfirea made up his mind. Other than himself, he wouldn't let anyone else sit beside Enri. Even if that person was strong enough to protect Enri. It was a bit rash, but Nfirea didn't want to lose Enri, so he decided to express the feelings he had harbored since the first time he ever came to the village as a child.

"Well then—" He couldn't speak, his throat seemed to be glued shut. Say it, say it. He wanted to say it, but the words seemed to be jammed in his throat and wouldn't come out. Both Enri and Nfirea were at a marriageable age, and the money Nfirea made as a pharmacist was enough to take care of Enri and her sister. It would be fine even if they had a child… The scenery of building his own family appeared in his mind… But he stopped his imagination that was going out of control. Noticing that Enri was looking at him with a puzzled expression, Nfirea became even more anxious. His mouth opened and shut.

I like you. I love you. But he couldn't say these two sentences. Because he was scared of hearing her rejection. He should say something that will shorten the distance between them. The city is safer, want to live together? I will take care of your sister too. If you want to work, you can help out in grandma's shop. If you feel uneasy in the city, I will do all I can do to help you. Just saying these would be enough. The chance of being rejected would be lower than expressing his love.

"Enri!"

"Wha-what is it? Nfirea." Enri was surprised by his sudden shout and Nfirea started his confession: "…If… If you have any troubles, please tell me. I will do all I can to help you!"

"Thank you! Nfirea is a great friend, better than what I deserved!"

"Ah, ah, ermm… No, don't mention it, we've known each other for so long." Unable to say anything else to the smiling Enri, Nfirea lamented his own uselessness. At the same time, he felt that Enri was really cute and chatted about their childhood for a moment. When the topic reached its end, Nfirea asked: "By the way, what's with those Goblins?"

Those goblins addressed Enri as 'elder sister'. And unlike the normal goblins he saw on the road, each of them looked like a veteran warrior. Not only that but seeing the traces of a magic caster in the village was even more shocking. He wondered how Enri, who was just a village girl, got to know that group of goblins and what the nature of their relationship was. Enri answered simply: "I used the item left by the savior of the village, Ainz Ooal Gown, and they appeared. They will obey my command."

"I see…" Enri's eyes sparkled like the stars, which made Nfirea miserable as he replied casually. Ainz Ooal Gown. Enri had mentioned this names several times already. When Carne village was attacked by people disguised as Knights of the Empire, a mysterious magic caster who happened to pass by, saved the village with his amazing powers and brought peace to the village. He was a hero who saved Enri, someone Nfirea should give thanks to.

But Enri's expression made it hard for him to express his gratitude. This was the natural reaction when Enri mentioned her savior, but the feelings of jealousy still sprang from his heart. The nature of a man is competitive, so he felt jealous because Enri didn't show that for himself. He was caught in these murky feelings and ugly thoughts.

As he was feeling miserable, Nfirea tried to push these emotions out of his mind and thought about the item Enri mentioned. It was used to summon goblins, known as Horn of the Goblin General. The great magic caster who saved the village obviously told Enri something about this horn, but since her mind was confused back then, she wasn't able to remember everything clearly. Nfirea thought it was strange. She might not know what kind of item it was, but she shouldn't

have forgotten about it. Since it was an item with special effects, you wouldn't forget about it after hearing it only once.

There were many items that could be used for summoning, and there were summoning spells too. But the summoned beings will disappear after a fixed amount of time has passed. 'Summoned monsters' were not monsters that could be controlled over a long time. If that item could accomplish this, the history of magic up to this point might be overturned.

How valuable would an item like that be? Enri appeared to be unaware if the item's value, but if she were to sell it she would be set for life. Enri used this rare item because she didn't want the village to get hurt again. Nfirea thought this way of thinking was just like Enri, which was why the summoned goblins protected the village, addressed Enri as elder sister, followed her commands and even helped in the fields.

Not only that, but he heard they were even teaching the villagers how to use a bow, teaching them ways of protecting themselves. That's how the village got their strange new residents. Part of the reason why the village accepted the goblins was that they were attacked by knights, who were fellow humans. They were no longer able to trust other humans as before, and at the same time it became easier for them to accept the goblins' help. The main reason was because the item was a gift from the magic caster who saved the village.

"That person called himself Ainz Ooal Gown, right? What kind of person was he? I want to express my thanks." Nfirea had no idea who Ainz Ooal Gown was. Enri said she didn't know how he looked like under the mask, so even if he were someone Nfirea knew, they wouldn't be able to tell. But anyone who gave away such a valuable item must be a great person. Nfirea would never forget if he had seen him before. After telling Enri what he thought, Enri looked disappointed.

"I see. I thought Nfirea would know who he was…" Enri's reaction made Nfirea's heart race and his back started to sweat. *"Appearance aside, considering his strength, the possibility of him being popular is high."* The words he heard last night surfaced in his mind and his breathing turned ragged. Calming his uneasiness for the moment, Nfirea asked: "En-, Enri, what's the matter? Why do you want to see that Ainz person?"

"Huh? Well, I want to thank him properly. The villagers proposed building a small bronze statue in remembrance of him saving our lives, I need to thank him too…" Sensing that the feelings of love, which Nfirea feared, were absent, Nfirea sighed in relief, relaxing his tensed shoulders: "Oh I see, erm… Phew. That's right, we need to thank him. If there was something special about him, we can narrow the search fields… Oh right, do you know what magic he used?"

"Ah, magic. It was amazing. With a loud bang of lightning, the knight fell."

"Lightning… Did you hear him say the word lightning?"

Enri gazed to the sky and nodded heavily. "Yes! I heard him say that." But it was longer… Listening to Enri's mumbled language, Nfirea judged that her mumblings were things said before activating a spell. "That… Is a 3rd tier spell."

"…3rd tier spell… Is that amazing?"

"That is definitely amazing! I can only use 2nd tier magic, 3rd tier is the highest normal people can achieve. For higher tiers, that would be in the realm of those with innate talent."

"Sir Gown is amazing!"

Enri was impressed and nodded, but Nfirea didn't think this magic caster was limited to 3rd tier spells. He could give away that item casually, so he might be able to use 5th tier magic that goes into the realm of heroes. Why did such a great person come to this village?

The puzzled Nfirea couldn't help tilting his head, but the doubt in his mind disappeared when he heard Enri's next words. "Not just that, he also gave me some red potion—" The story he heard was bits and pieces of the whole incident, which reminded Nfirea of a conversation he heard some time ago.

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"I will you pay you for your trouble, could you describe in detail the person who gave you the potion?" The warrior named Britta was displeased by Lizzie's request: "What are you planning by asking this?"

"Obviously, it would be a clue for me to find him. Find the mysterious man in full body armor. If I get close to him, he might tell me where he got that potion from, right? He might even spill it accidentally. If he is an adventurer, I plan to hire him. What do you think, Nfirea?"

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This was the reason Nfirea asked for Momon by name. He wanted to find out information about the potion by deepening their friendship. Aside from this, during the process of heading to the forest to harvest herbs, Momon might unknowingly leak some other information. Nfirea worked hard to hide his excitement, asking Enri carefully with a calm voice like before. "Oh, what kind of potion was it?"

"Eh?"

"You know that I am a pharmacist, I am interested in potions."

"Ah, that's right! These kind of things are your job." Enri told Nfirea everything about how the magic caster gave her the potion. Enri mentioned the amazing feats of Ainz Ooal Gown while doing so, which would had made Nfirea from just now jealous. But right now, his mind was full of something else. After consolidating all the information and unveiling several layers of mask, the hidden identity was finally revealed.

The potion in E-Rantel and the potion Enri drank might be the same thing. And the people who appeared in both of these places were duo travelers of magic caster and warrior in black armor. There was only one answer, but there were two candidates for the one claiming to be Ainz Ooal Gown. He seemed to be a man from Enri's description, but to be safe, Nfirea asked to confirm: "…The person named Ainz Ooal Gown, could she be… A woman?"

"Hmmm? No? I didn't see his face, but the voice belonged to a man." This evidence wasn't enough to prove that the other party was definitely a man, there could be spells and items to

change one's voice. But it felt wrong equating Nabe with Ainz Ooal Gown. The cool and bumbling Nabe compared to the intelligent, collected and helpful Ainz, they were too different. It was too far of a stretch to link them together—

"The one in black armor seemed to be called Albedo."

"I, I see…" He remembered that Nabe mentioned that name. The cat is out of the bag. Ainz Ooal Gown is Momon. This showed an amazing fact. The magic caster who saved the village was also an accomplished warrior. There were warriors who were trained in magic, but the balance will trend towards one of the skills. It was the same for magic casters. If mana based magic caster wore heavy armor, they wouldn't be able to chant spells.

A 3rd tier magic caster and an adamantite rank swordsman adventurer. What an absurd existence. If there really was someone like that, he would definitely be a hero among heroes. But if that were the case, why was he asking so many questions during their travels? The most logical explanation would be that he was a magic caster who learned unknown techniques in a foreign nation, so he didn't know these things. If that were the case, it would be natural for him to possess foreign potions which Nfirea knew nothing about.

Nfirea got this valuable information and his breathing turned ragged; he couldn't stop it even though he knew Enri was looking at him strangely. Complicated feelings emerged in his heart at the same time. Compared to Ainz, who saved Enri and gave her a potion, he was despicable and detestable for getting close to him in order to learn the secrets of making that potion. Enri should prefer such a man. He can't help sighing when he thought of that.

"Are you okay? You don't look so good."

"Erm, yes. I'm fine, just thinking of something…" If he found out how to create the potion, he could save many people and cleanse his sense of guilt. But the chance of that happening was slim. He just wanted to obtain new methods of making potions as a pharmacist. He wasn't just a powerful warrior, but an excellent magic caster too. A beauty accompanied him, he possessed unknown potions and he had a strong sense of justice to save the village that was in danger. Nfirea compared such a man with himself. Nfirea felt a depressingly wide chasm between himself and Momon… No, Ainz Ooal Gown.

"What's the matter? You look weird?"

"Ah, yeah. It's nothing." Nfirea held back his sigh and smiled, but he wasn't confident that he could smile naturally. Enri made an expression that showed she had seen through Nfirea's fake smile. "…What should I do? Enri hates people who hide their shameful affairs right?"

"…Before we are called forth by God, everyone has things that he or she keeps in their heart. Especially things that cause misfortune when said. But if keeping these secrets cause misfortune to others, that would be another matter… I won't detest you for this, so no matter what crimes you committed, it would be better to surrender yourself to the authorities!"

"…No, I didn't commit any crimes."

"Eh… Yes! That's right! There was no way Nfirea would commit crimes! I trust you deeply!"

Looking at Enri who was laughing forcefully, Nfirea relaxed the strength in his shoulders. “Yes, but I still have to thank you. You made things easier in some ways. I will work hard to be as good as he is.” In order to lift my face high and say to you that I like you, I love you. In response to Nfirea’s determined announcement and his words earlier, the confused Enri simply nodded and smiled politely.

Chapter 3: Virtuous King of the Forest, Part 2

"Oh—" Ainz sighed and looked towards the village in admiration. There were many different villagers all standing in a line. Men and women, old and young, they were all there. There were forty-year-old plump women who looked like mothers, there were also youths whose age looked around ten years old. All of them were serious to an extent that they appeared hostile. No one was fooling around. A goblin holding a bow was speaking to them.

Even with Ainz's sensitive hearing, he couldn't hear what they were saying from this distance. A few moments later, the lined-up villagers slowly picked up their bows. They were simple short bows and judging by their shape, they were probably self-made. After fully drawing the bow, they aimed at the scarecrows some distance away. The goblin probably issued a command and the villagers fired in unison. The bows might look simple, but the arc of the arrows was beautiful. Everyone hit the scarecrow, no one missed.

"Not bad." Ainz praised. "Is that so?" Narberal asked doubtfully, standing behind him. From her perspective, she probably wouldn't understand why a technique of this level was worthy of praise. Compared to the archers in the Great Tomb of Nazarick, this was child's play. Ainz understood how Narberal felt and smiled bitterly under his helmet.

"You're right Narberal, their skill with the bow may not be that amazing. But just ten days ago, they couldn't even use a bow. They aren't passively hoping their spouses, children and parents won't die in another tragedy, instead they're actively taking up arms to defend themselves whenever necessary. Isn't the technique they learned with this courage worthy of praise?"

What was praiseworthy, was the hate that pushed the villagers to this extent. "My apologies. I hadn't thought about it so deeply…"

"Its fine, no need to think too much, Narberal. Their technique itself isn't worthy of praise anyway." Ainz watched the arrows fly through the sky and pierce the scarecrow, and a thought surfaced in his mind. *How strong would they become? How strong can I get?* In Yggdrasil, Ainz had already reached the level cap of 100. His experience points were at 90% of the limit when he came to this world. This was just a hypothesis, but since his other abilities were still intact, the level system in this world should be the same.

The problem was whether he could obtain the remaining 10% of experience points and reach level 101. Considering this question, Ainz could guess the answer. He couldn't get stronger. He had already reached the peak of power. Ainz was strong, but he won't get stronger. But the villagers were weak and might become unexpectedly strong. If the people in this world didn't have any limit to their growth, they could exceed the level 100 peak in Yggdrasil. If that happened, Ainz and his underlings in the Great Tomb of Nazarick wouldn't be able to match them. But this will absolutely—

"It might happen though…" Ainz thought it could be possible that the Six Gods of the Slane Theocracy were players. He didn't know why the time of their appearance was so far apart from

his, but if the Six Gods were from heteromorphic races without limited lifespan, or if they had lifespan-specific class, there was a high probability that they were still alive.

If the Six Gods were still hiding in the Slane Theocracy, then during the last 600 years there might've been those who used the strength of the Six Gods to power level, gaining experience faster than normal through the help of powerful players, it wouldn't be surprising if someone over level 100 showed up. Then the reason Slane Theocracy didn't rule this world would be due to an existence with a similar level. Or maybe level 100 was nothing impressive here.

When he thought about that, Ainz's non-existent stomach started to cramp. If the Six Gods were players, he had to try his best to get on their good side, even if the information gathering wasn't complete. But according to the survivors of the Sunlight Scripture, the Knights of the Empire who attacked the village were actually imposters from the Theocracy, which would mean that saving this village was the same as opposing the Theocracy.

"Maybe it was a mistake to help them…" He needed to gather more information after all. While Ainz was preoccupied with such thoughts, he noticed a young man running towards him. The eyes, which were normally covered by hair, were visible as his hair swayed in the wind. He was staring straight at Ainz. Seeing Nfirea's behavior, Ainz got a bad feeling. It was the same look of panic he had seen in the village chief.

"What's the hurry? Is there another emergency? This village is really…" Nfirea reached Ainz, who was rambling on. Nfirea was panting, and his forehead was drenched in sweat, causing his hair to part. It revealed his serious expression, looking at Ainz and Narberal. He seemed to hesitate for a moment, not sure how to speak. He finally made up his mind and asked Ainz: "Momon-san, are you Sir Ainz Ooal Gown?"

This sudden question dumbfounded Ainz. The correct answer should be no. But could he say that? That was the name he and his friends created. Even though it was his name right now, could he really deny it? This period of hesitation was the best proof, and Nfirea went on.

"So it is you, Sir Gown. Thank you for saving this village and Enri." Ainz answered the bowing Nfirea: "No… I…" Hearing the words Ainz managed to squeeze out, Nfirea nodded understandingly: "I understand you're hiding your identity for some reason, but I still wanted to thank you for saving this village… No, for saving Enri. Thank you for saving the girl I like."

He felt like an old uncle, thinking that 'like' was a word only used by youths. For a moment he allowed himself to reminisce about the past, while thinking about other, more important things. "Ah… Enough… Lift your head." This meant admitting that he was Ainz Ooal Gown, which meant he had no possible explanation to refute Nfirea's idea. It was Ainz's loss.

"Yes, Sir Gown. Also, actually… I've been hiding something from you."

"…Follow me. Nabe, stand by here." After issuing the order to Narberal, Ainz brought Nfirea to some place further away. This was to prevent Narberal from hearing anything strange and getting agitated. After getting some distance away from Narberal, Ainz turned around to face the youth.

"Actually…" Nfirea gulped nervously, then made a determined face. "Sir Gown, the potion you gave to the woman at the tavern is impossible to create using normal methods and thus is very

rare. I wanted to know what kind of person owned such a potion and it's brewing method, that's why I requested you for this job. I am very sorry."

"Oh, so that's it." That was the mistake. Ainz gave a potion to Enri in this village, and he gave a similar potion to someone in E-Rantel. That was how his identity got exposed. Not only that—

…I should had gotten that potion back. If only I had asked for the name of that female adventurer… But there's no point crying over spilled milk. Ainz thought that giving her the potion was the best way back in E-Rantel. She had said *"With such a flashy armor, you must have some potions, right?"*

She probably didn't mean to, but that greatly limited the actions Ainz could take. For example, if someone got out of a classy car, wearing expensive clothes and dressed extravagantly, you would think that the car fit the man. However, what if he dressed poorly? You would think that man spent all his money on the car and mock him. Ainz wanted to avoid that.

If he rejected her back then, the beauty of his companion Narberal and his flashy armor would be the subject of envy and unfavorable rumors would be spread. Things like rumors would stick with you for life and people would pick on that wound endlessly. Ainz came to this place in order to raise his fame as an adventurer, so he needed to avoid doing things that might damage his reputation.

After considering all this, he gave the potion away. It was a gamble, but it wasn't regrettable even though he lost. It wasn't a total loss yet, there were still a chance to patch things up. Ainz wasn't perfect and will continue making mistakes. But he didn't understand why Nfirea was apologizing.

"There is no reason to apologize, right?"

"Eh?"

"…It is uncomfortable to hide things and asking to shake your hand with a smile. But the request this time was made in order to build a relationship right? So what is the problem?" Ainz asked in sincere bafflement. "Sir Gown is really forgiving…" Ainz didn't understand why Nfirea was impressed.

Human relations were the basic requirement in society; there was no problem in wanting to establish relationships. It might be vague, but Ainz had understood something. Maybe Nfirea viewed himself as an industrial spy who was getting close to him in order to his steal secrets.

"If I tell you how to make the potion, what would you do with this information?" Nfirea yelled in surprised and answered after pondering shortly: "I didn't think that far. I'm driven by curiosity… My grandmother is probably the same."

"I see. That isn't a problem. It would be different if you were planning to commit some felonies, but its fine if you don't plan to do that."

"How amazing. No wonder… She idolizes you…"

The mumbling youth's hair had dried in the wind and covered his eyes once more. But Ainz could see his envious eyes. They were the eyes of a youth, who likes baseball, seeing a pro. The young

man's expression was similar to the one made by Ainz and his comrades who were rescued after being PKed repeatedly: being in awe by the strength of a savior.

The feelings of embarrassment surfaced and were suppressed. Nfirea's attitude affected his heart, surprising Ainz, but he recovered immediately and took action. He had to find out something first. "By the way, are you the only one who knows I am Ainz?"

"Yes, I didn't tell anyone."

"I see, that's great."

Ainz thought about how to ask Nfirea as he said that. He had no clue how to go about it, so he requested directly. "…Right now I am an ordinary adventurer called Momon. I would be grateful if you could remember that."

"Yes, I thought you would say that. I know it would cause Momon-san a lot of trouble, but I can't help wanting to express my thanks to you. Thank you very much for saving Enri and this village." With serious eyes, Nfirea sincerely expressed his thanks to Ainz.

"There's no need to be so formal. I simply happened to be passing by."

"But even so, there was no need to give that horn as a present." The horn wasn't given for any special reason, but it's good that Nfirea thought of it as kindness. Ainz didn't say anything, just nodded generously. As the client, Nfirea said that they would head into the forest in an hour. He expressed his thanks for saving the village again and left. As he watched Nfirea's figure move away, Narberal came before Ainz and bowed.

"Ainz-sama, I am very sorry!"

"People are watching, raise your head." When Narberal lift her head, Ainz spoke thornily: "Yes, you should be sorry; it's because you mentioned Albedo's name." *Being exposed had nothing to do with her mentioning Albedo, but that was a huge blunder. I will use this chance to correct her and warn her to never do it again. First would be banning her from addressing me as Ainz… But… No one seemed to have heard…*

"Allow me to atone for my crime with death!" She didn't sound like she was kidding. Everyone in the Grand Tomb of Nazarick was like that, treating the 41 members of Ainz Ooal Gown as the Supreme Beings, the absolute authority and took glory in serving them. It was a bit heavy for Ainz, but it wasn't bad if the NPC he created served him happily. That was the fate of all creators. Narberal was an NPC like that. If she were jokingly ordered to commit suicide, she would oblige immediately. She was seeking permission because of her sense of absolute duty to her master, since she saw her life as the property of her master.

"…Enough. No matter who, everyone makes mistakes. Just work hard and avoid failing again. Work hard step-by-step and don't make the same mistake. I won't pursue this failure further, Narberal Gamma." Her feelings of wanting to die to atone for her failure and Ainz's refusal for her to do that. Narberal was trapped between these two emotions. Shortly after, Ainz felt the scale of her emotions fall towards one end.

Narberal lowered her head slowly: “I am very grateful! I will take care and not make the same mistake next time!”

“…Yes, don’t take it too hard. Because the adventurer known as Momon… This disguised identity isn’t a complete failure yet, just be careful next time. But… Depending on how things pans out, we might need to dispose of Nfirea…”

“Right now?”

“Don’t joke with me. It would be more troublesome to mess up the assigned job.”

Nfirea’s grandmother is a famous pharmacist in E-Rantel. Angering her would make achieving Ainz’s goal even harder. “Anyway… Let’s see how things turns out.” Right now, that was the best he could do.

Chapter 3: Virtuous King of the Forest, Part 3

A few hundred meters away, there was a large clearing in the direction of the forest. The goblins felled the trees there to construct the palisade, but the opening looked like the maw of a giant monster. Ainz's group did their final check here. The young man who made the job request was the first to speak up:

“We will be entering the forest now; I will be relying on everyone to act as escorts. The territory of the Virtuous King of the Forest isn’t far from here, if everything goes well the chance of encountering other monsters will be low. The only problem is that the place where we encountered the ogres yesterday was also inside the Virtuous King of the Forest's area of influence, so something might be happening in the forest. This is a somewhat trivial matter, but nevertheless I hope everybody will keep their guard up.”

Nfirea's gaze stopped on Ainz's face momentarily. The members of the ‘Swords of Darkness’ also looked at Ainz. “With Momon-san here, it shouldn't be a problem.”

“If the Virtuous King of the Forest shows up, we will keep it busy. Please escape in the meanwhile.” Ainz's confident words made everyone swoon. After the battle with the Ogres yesterday, he became the center of attention. Ainz felt uncomfortable with everyone praising him… His embarrassment was the result of not having been praised much in his past life. Ainz envied Narberal who accepted all this proudly.

“If there’s a need to run, could I trouble you all to clear the area? The stronger the Virtuous King of the Forest is, the more power I need to use and I don’t want everyone getting caught in the crossfire.”

“Understood. We will protect Nfirea-san and escape out of the forest. Please don't push yourself too much either, Momon-san.”

“Thank you. I will run if I think it is too dangerous.”

“Erm… Momon-san.” Nfirea who was hesitant about speaking up finally made up his mind: “Could you spare the Virtuous King of the Forest and just chase him away?”

“…Why?”

“Well… Because of the influence of the Virtuous King of the Forest, Carne is able to avoid the attacks of monsters. If you defeat the Virtuous King of the Forest…”

“I see…”

“This is rather tough. Momon-san might be very strong, but the opponent is a legendary monster. If he doesn't use his full power, Momon-san might not be able to protect himself. How could he spare the effort—”

“I understand.”

“Huh?!” Lukeluther yelled in surprise. The other members of the Swords of Darkness didn’t speak up, but they still had a surprised expression on their faces. “It might be difficult, but I will do my best to hold back and endeavor to drive it away.” Listening to Ainz’s confident words, the group of adventurers felt shivers running down their spines. “Even though the opponent… Is the legendary monster that lived for centuries…”

“This is the attitude of a powerful man…”

“Considering Momon-san's personality, he shouldn’t be boasting…” Unlike the members of the Swords of Darkness, Nfirea had a rough idea of Ainz’s strength and was showing a relieved expression. Ainz smiled in his heart as he watched this young man.

The young man hoped that no monsters would attack Carne village. If Ainz replaced the Virtuous King of the Forest with another monster to maintain the sphere of influence, Ainz could still grant the young man's wish. Even if Ainz killed the Virtuous King of the Forest, he could resolve the issue by sending an underling from Nazarick to take over.

“Alright! Let's make haste, the herb I want to harvest looks like this. Please inform me if anyone finds these.” Nfirea took out a dried plant from the pouch on his waist. “Oh, it’s Arnica grass!” To Ainz, this plant was no different from the weed growing nearby, but the druid Dyne could tell the difference and identify it by name. Reacting to this name, Lukeluther and Ninya nodded in agreement. They probably had some knowledge about plants and found the name familiar. As Ainz was hesitating if he should pretend to know about it, everyone was looking at him.

“Would you have any problem, Momon-san?”

“Hmmm? Ah, that plant? I got it.” Ainz nodded calmly. If not for the mental tenacity of the undead, his voice would’ve wavered or changed in tone. But Ainz expression was covered by his helmet, so no one would know what he was thinking. Ainz who was covered in layers of metal looked impressive, but he was wavering on the inside.

“Yes, this is the herb that is normally used in the process of making recovery potions.”

“And it grows near the adventurers’ guild!”

“Oh, is that so. Then the mystery of why we made the trip to the forest in order to harvest the herb is solved… I heard that wild herbs are more potent than farmed ones?”

“That's correct. All the potions from my place uses natural herbs and that is a selling point to be proud of! But the potency only increases about 10 percent.”

“For people with their life on the line, these 10 percent are very important. Selling better potions for the same retail price as others… As expected of the famous Bareare pharmacy.”

Listening to the members of the Swords of Darkness discussing potions with Nfirea, Ainz fell into deep thought. Yggdrasil's potions were made using skills that were available to specific job classes and enchanting ingredients with spells. Ainz had knowledge about this, but he heard it was

created from a specific material and alchemic liquid. He had never heard about using herbs… This meant that potion creation in this world was different from Yggdrasil.

When Nfirea said 'it couldn't be made through normal means', this was probably the reason. Ainz believed that if he could harness skills techniques related to the potions of this world, it would strengthen Nazarick. The only question was how. As he was deep in thought, the topic once again returned to the job at hand and Ainz listened carefully.

“There is a large, open clearing in the forest; I plan to set that area as our target. I already told Lukeluther-san about that place, so please lead the way.” After hearing Lukeluther reply 'Leave it to me', Nfirea returned his gaze to everyone. “Let's start the harvesting—”

“I’d like to make a suggestion.”

“Please enlighten us, Momon-san.”

“Since Narberal can use a spell similar to the ‘Alarm’ spell used back in the camp, could we split up temporarily after reaching the destination?” Everyone including Nfirea frowned. They felt uneasy about the strongest combatant leaving in the middle of the most dangerous area…

Nfirea composed himself and replied: “That's fine, but please don't take too long.”

“Of course. To avoid getting lost in the forest, I will leave a trail of rope. Just pull it if anything happens.”

“Should I come along? I need to watch out to make sure you don’t do anything weird with Nabe-chan.”

“Die you lower life form (aphid). Is there only lust in your brain? Can you even move if that is gone?”

“…Enough Nabe. Lukeluther-san, that won't be necessary. Ninya-san, is there any magic that allows us to locate each other if we get separated in the forest? It would be convenient if there is.”

“I have never heard of such a spell. Such a spell would indeed be convenient.”

After hearing Ninya's negative reply, Ainz nodded. *Among the magic of the 6th tier, there is a spell that allows you to locate specific objects. Does he lack the knowledge, or does Yggdrasil have spells that do not exist in this world?* Leaving this question aside, Ainz gestured at Nabe with his chin, signaling her to get ready. Nabe received the order and watched the Swords of Darkness members closely: “Momon-san and Nabe-san are leaving for a moment; they will start harvesting when they return.”

Since the client decided this, no one protested. All the members of the Swords of Darkness agreed and nodded. After concluding the final check, Nfirea gave the cue to set off in a loud voice. The ground where the trees were cut down by the villagers had dried up. The woodland was easy to traverse, but the scenery in front of them gradually changed into a green maze.

The forest didn’t have any landmarks, to the point where one was unable to tell which direction they were heading. It created a feeling of helpless anxiety, an uneasiness that stemmed from having nothing to rely on. The trees covering the sky reinforced that effect and normal people

would be afraid. But due to the mental strength of an undead, Ainz wouldn't feel any fear apart from his own lingering human emotions, calmly watching the grandiose scene of nature in awe.

In Yggdrasil, forests and other natural zones were nothing but the game world's sceneries, this kind of thought appeared in his heart. Ainz, who was proud of the Great Tomb of Nazarick's design felt conflicted; he didn't realize that a natural forest could be so amazing. *I understand why Blue Planet-san likes nature so much…*

As he watched the surroundings of the forest for signs of monsters, he noted that it was really quiet. Apart from the cawing of far-away birds, Ainz couldn't sense any living creatures. He could see the back of the ranger Lukeluther, who used all his senses as he cautiously advanced. Lukeluther seemed to think there weren't any living beings hiding out there.

Actually, someone is hiding behind us. Ainz was proud of the person approaching them unnoticed from the back. The group, except for Ainz and Narberal, were quietly moving in the sunlight while feeling extremely tense. The forest was surprisingly cool, but due to the uneven ground and the psychological pressure, the group was sweating buckets.

They finally reached an open space with a width of fifty meters. "This will be our base. Let's pick the plants with here as the center." Upon hearing Nfirea's words and seeing him put down his bags, everyone else followed suit but didn't let down their guard, prepared for any emergency as they watched their surroundings. This was no longer the world of men.

"Let's move as we planned." After acknowledging Nfirea, Ainz tied a rope on a nearby tree and entered the forest as he left the trail of rope behind him. The rope was thin and strong; it wouldn't break easily because of friction against the ground. Ainz and Nabe did their best to move in a straight line into the forest.

Normally, it was impossible to move in a straight line through the forest as your path would be blocked by trees. But with the rope as a guide, the two who were inexperienced in forest navigation were able to advance in a straight line. Their backs were covered by trees, so there was no danger of being spied on. Someone who could detect anyone who was following them was nearby, so there was no need to worry.

"This place should do."

"Yes."

"Let us discuss how to raise my fame."

"…May I ask what your plans are? Find plenty of the herbs they are after?" Ainz silently looked at Narberal and shook his head: "I intend to fight the Virtuous King of the Forest." Ainz continued to explain to the baffled Narberal: "Our goal is to display our strength in a clear and simple way."

"…Didn't we show them plenty during the fight against the ogres?"

"…You are right, but monsters like goblins and ogres aren't enough. If they tell about my exploits back in the city, saying that I defeated the Virtuous King of the Forest is on a whole different level than cleaving an ogre in half in terms of fame. That's why we need to put on a good performance."

“I see! As expected of Ainz-sama! A flawless plan! But how would we find that Virtuous King of the Forest?”

“I already planned for that.”

Narberal was about to enquire further, but was interrupted by the voice of a third party: “Yes… That's why I’m here.” The sudden sound made Narberal turn and look with sharp eyes. She extended her right hand and prepared to fire her spell at the target, but after recognizing the owner of the voice, she regained her composed expression: “Aura-sama! Please don't scare me like that.”

“Sorry.” Appearing from behind the trees was a smiling dark elf girl. One of the sixth floor twin Guardians of the Grand Tomb of Nazarick, Aura Bella Fiora. “When did you arrive?”

“Hmmm? I was following you since you and Ainz-sama entered the forest.”

Aura was a beast tamer cum ranger, tracking in the forest was a piece of cake for her. Lukeluther might be a ranger as well, but the difference in their skills were too vast for him to detect Aura. “I was summoned here to find the monster known as the Virtuous King of the Forest and make it attack Ainz-sama.”

“That's right, according to the intelligence I got, the Virtuous King of the Forest has white fur, a snake-like tail, and is a four legged beast… Does this ring any bells?”

“Yes, no problem. It's probably that fellow.”

Aura looked upwards and replied confidently: “If that’s the case, want me to tame it directly?”

“…That's a plan too, but there is no need.” If it was the tamer Aura, she would be able to tame the Virtuous King of the Forest easily. But it would be bad if others found out it was just a show. Removing all these issues from the very beginning would be the best way. “By the way Aura, how is the other task I ordered you to carry out going?”

“Yes!” Aura knelt immediately to pay her respect to her master. It didn't feel like Aura's style, but Ainz accommodated her actions and listened with the attitude of a master.

“Ainz-sama ordered me to explore and understand the forest and find any living beings willing to join Nazarick, and set up a warehouse to store resources. Everything is proceeding smoothly.”

“I see.” Ainz replied curtly. Before heading to E-Rantel, he issued different orders to each of the Guardians.

Aura and Mare were dispatched to the forest to ensure the safety of Nazarick and collect intelligence. As for the warehouse, terming it as an emergency shelter would be more adequate. Aura was ordered to set such a place up so that in the event of an emergency preventing a return to Nazarick, it could serve as a hiding place. Also, having another base would help in preventing Nazarick from being exposed. And of course, it serves as a warehouse to keep all sort of materials.

Tasking her to find creatures willing to work for Nazarick was to confirm the possibility of power levelling, and what the ways of levelling up in this world were. Because they were tasked with

various missions, powerful beings like Aura, Mare and their underlings came to the forest to establish a base, upsetting the power balance in the forest. This forced monsters such as ogres to enter the Virtuous King of the Forest's territory in order to escape the forest. “But the construction of the warehouse will take a very long time.”

“That is unavoidable. It hadn't been long since I issued the order.”

Even though they brought golems and undead helpers that could work without rest, it was still a huge amount of work to be done. “You can take your time, but do it right. And beef up the defenses so it won't fall easily when attacked.”

“Yes! By your command!”

“Excellent. Well then, I leave the task regarding the Virtuous King of the Forest to you.”

“Yes!”

Aura replied energetically and stood up. After Ainz left, a giant black wolf with bright fur seemed to be waiting for this moment and sauntered slowly out of the trees. Its crimson eyes seemed to be burning and were full of intelligence, proving that it wasn't a simple beast. That wasn’t all. On top of the other trees, a 6 legged monster that seemed to be a cross of chameleon and iguana was changing its skin color rapidly. It was as large as the wolf.

“Fenny, Crackerlacile, what’s wrong? Were you guys worried about me?” The giant wolf named Fenny whined and butted Aura with its head. Crackerlacile stuck out its tongue and patted Aura's head. “Hey, we still have the work Ainz-sama ordered us to carry out.” Among the Guardians, Aura was second worst in strength, even some area Guardians were stronger than her. But that was in terms of single combat power. Aura’s strength wasn’t single combat, but group fights.

Among the hundreds of monsters tamed by Aura, the strongest was level 80. With the special support skills of Aura, it was equivalent to level 90. With her monsters, Aura's fighting prowess could overwhelm the single combat power of the other Guardians. Among Aura's tamed beasts, these two are Aura's favorite high-level monsters, the holy beast Fenrir, Fenny, and the similarly powerful Itzamna, Crackerlacile. Fenny and Crackerlacile stopped playing around after hearing Aura's words.

“Good, let's go!” Aura brought the two beast along and ran through the forest. Her speed wasn't affected even though she was in the forest, moving as fast as the wind. After running for about 30 minutes, Aura reached her destination. Aura had a cold smile that didn't match her young age. It felt innocent and cruel at the same time.

“I wanted to claim this for myself, but since this is Ainz-sama's order, it couldn't be helped.” Aura didn't seem to be talking to her pet. She was mumbling as if she was talking about some accessories. She knew about the Virtuous King of the Forest's nest because Aura wanted to tame it before. The Virtuous King of the Forest was weak when compared to Aura's monsters, so it wasn't worth much. But it was an unknown monster to Aura, so it spurred her collector’s spirit. It was a pity to not add it to her collection, but she had no complains if it was for the supreme master she was willing to offer everything to.

“Okay.” Aura changed the composition of the air in her lungs. The unnatural air composition was breathed out of her slightly opened, pink lips. It was a breathing technique to control emotions. It radiates around herself normally and had a short range, so it was a special passive ability. But if Aura desired it, it could be combined with her ranged attack and hit a single target 2km away. Even if it was in such a dense forest.

But there was no need to do so this time. Her aim was to erase her presence and approach the target undetected. Wild animals aside, even monsters which had better senses couldn't notice Aura's approach. Aura boldly walked to the side of the Virtuous King of the Forest with her presence erased and took a light breath.

Her breath was composed of elements that incited fear, suddenly awakening the Virtuous King of the Forest that was in deep slumber. All the fur on the Virtuous King of the Forest stood on end and it ran off in a panic. A frightened four legged beast was surprisingly fast. But Aura, who was chasing it, was faster. With breaths from time to time to guide the Virtuous King of the Forest to Ainz, Aura was chasing it just like 'death'.

♦ ♦ ♦

The forest turned noisy. Perking up his ears, Lukeluther was wary because of the change in the air of the forest and observed the surroundings with a serious face. “Something is coming.” Hearing this, the members of the ‘Swords of Darkness’ who were picking herbs drew their weapons and prepared for battle. Ainz also held his giant sword tightly. “Is it the Virtuous King of the Forest?” No one answered Nfirea, who put the herbs into his pack. Everyone looked into the depth of the forest in silence. “This is bad.”

The carefree Lukeluther shouted in a stern voice: “Something big is heading this way. I don't know why it is moving in a meandering path, but judging from the sound of it trampling the grass, it should be here soon. But… It's uncertain whether this is the Virtuous King of the Forest or not.”

“Retreat, it's dangerous to stay here even if it’s not the Virtuous King of the Forest. We are in its territory, so even if it's not the Virtuous King of the Forest, the chances of it attacking us is high.”

Peter said as he looked towards Ainz: “Momon-san, could you act as the rear guard?”

“No problem, leave it to me… I will take care of the rest.” The members of the ‘Swords of Darkness’ offered words of encouragement as they retreated out of the forest with Nfirea in toll. “Momon-san, please don't push yourself too hard.” Nfirea's voice had absolute confidence in Ainz, his eyes covered under his bangs were full of adoration. Ainz felt uneasy and urged them to leave faster. After seeing the group disappear at the other side of the forest, Ainz momentarily feared that he couldn't navigate out of the forest by himself. But he immediately remembered that he could let Aura guide him. The task at hand…

“Oh no… It might not be recognized as the Virtuous King of the Forest… Even if I want to take the Virtuous King of the Forest back to Nazarick, I have to obtain proof that I defeated it… How about slashing off one of its legs?”

“Ainz-sama.” In the direction Narberal was looking, there was a large shadow some distance behind the forest. Ainz couldn't see it because it was hidden behind the forest. The sunlight didn't reach it, so he couldn't confirm if its body was silvery white.

“Is the guest here?” *Maybe I am the guest*, Ainz thought about random things as he stood in front of Narberal. He couldn't convert its power to levels, so Ainz wasn't sure of the Virtuous King of the Forest's power. So Ainz naturally stood before the magic caster Narberal, who wasn't proficient in melee combat, to protect her. Standing before Narberal, Ainz felt a flow in the air and used his giant sword to shield himself. The sound of metal clashing reverberated and Ainz felt a heavy pressure in his arms. Something heavy hit Ainz's giant sword at a very high speed.

He could see a long tail with scales like a snake sliding back behind the trees. *The tail attacked like a whip. Judging from the sound and sensation of the impact, that tail is as tough as steel… It having range of more than 20m is troubling, but how does it live its normal life with such a tail?* Ainz lacked the special skills of a vanguard and couldn't think of any way to deal with it. The best he could do was melee combat.

Ainz sighed. He didn't have lungs, so he was just going through the motion. He lowered his shoulders and adopted a stance. Seeing that Ainz was prepared to fight, a deep and calm voice came from the forest: “To completely block the first attack of this king, impressive… To meet such an opponent… This is the first for this king.”

“This king…” Ainz's illusionary face stiffens, then he remembered that these words were translated. According to the judgement of Ainz's mind, these were the words closest to what it said.

“Well then, intruder to the territory of this king. If thou is thinking of fleeing, I will let the matter rest since you displayed such excellent defense… How about it?”

“…What a foolish question. Of course I will defeat you and reap the rewards… Anyway, are you hiding because you lack confidence in your appearance or are you shy by nature?”

“…What imposturous words, intruder! Behold this king's majestic figure and tremble in fear!”

The Virtuous King of the Forest emerged from the forest slowly, showing itself to Ainz. After seeing it, Ainz's illusionary face stared with eyes wide open. “Hahaha, this king could feel the terror and shock from beneath thy helmet.” The monster's face wrinkled in a smile and its long tail coiled up. Strange markings that resemble words appeared on its silvery white body. It was about the size of a horse but was very short, a stout body that developed horizontally. The Virtuous King of the Forest closed the distance slowly.

“What is this feeling…” Emotions that were hard to describe washed over Ainz. After becoming an undead, every strong emotion would be suppressed. Considering this, this wasn’t a strong emotion. Even so, including the time when Yggdrasil was a game, he had never felt this way after seeing a monster. “…I want to ask one thing, what is your race known as?”

“This king is the Virtuous King of the Forest thou speak of. There are no other names.”

“Could your race’s name be… Djungarian hamster?”

Virtuous King of the Forest. From what Ainz knew, its appearance was similar to an animal known as Djungarian hamster. It had silvery or white fur, black round eyes and a body shaped like a mochi. Of course, hamsters didn’t have such a long tail and they wouldn't grow larger than

a man. Other than that, Ainz couldn't think of any other creature to describe it. If you asked a hundred people, the answer you would get a hundred times would be hamster. A gigantic Djungarian hamster, or a mutant Djungarian hamster.

It tilted its cute head, it didn't look like it had a neck, and kept sniffing the air while it spoke: "Hmm… This king has always lived a solitary life. I don't know about others of my race, so I can't answer you… Might thou know what race this king belongs to?"

"Eh… Yeah… You could say that… A past comrade of mine raised an animal similar to you…" Ainz recalled how said companion didn't log into Yggdrasil for an entire week after his pet Djungarian hamster died of old age. Behind his back, Narberal muttered a silent "Oh…" probably because she learned something new about the 41 Supreme Beings.

"What! To keep a being similar to this king as a pet!" The Virtuous King of the Forest puffed its cheeks. Ainz wasn't sure if that was an unhappy or threatening expression, or maybe it was displaying some other emotions. Ainz was only sure it wasn't eating anything. "Hmmm… Pray explain the details. This king has the obligation to continue the lineage of my race. If others from my race exist, I have the duty to raise the next generation, or this king wouldn't be fit to be called a living being."

According to the Virtuous King of the Forest's theory, Ainz who couldn't produce offspring wasn't fit to be a living being. Ainz thought about the excuse of an undead not being a living being and answered tiredly: "…Eh, that creature wasn't as big as you."

"Is that so… Could it be a child?"

"…No, even fully matured, it was small enough to place in my hand." The Virtuous King of the Forest seemed to be dejected as its whiskers drooped down. "That's a bit hard… Is this king fated to live alone till death…"

"…A cooler race would be more like it… But a hamster. I empathize with your situation, but if you find another one of your race, your numbers would increase exponentially and the world might be destroyed…" The Virtuous King of the Forest's whiskers perked up while its beady eyes remained the same. It sounded a bit angry: "How preposterous! Continuing to raise next generation is of grave importance! And this king has always been alone! It is natural to want to meet others of my kind!"

"Eh… Yeah… It's obvious to think about it this way… Pleases forgive my slip of the tongue…"

Ainz thought about his comrades in Ainz Ooal Gown and apologized. The words of this hamster reminded him of his comrades and he actually apologized to a hamster, which gave him some complicated feelings. "…Never mind, I will forgive thee. It's time to end the useless banter, let's duel to the death… Be aware… Those who invade onto this king's realm will end up as food!"

"Huh… Yeah…" Ainz felt he was losing his drive.

He knew that cute appearance was just on the outside, but Ainz was unmotivated. The Overlord of the Great Tomb of Nazarick dueling against a giant hamster. Objectively speaking, this scene

was too sad. If he defeated it, would he need to drag the body of the giant hamster back and tell others about it?

"This is the Virtuous King of the Forest; I couldn't chase it away because the battle was too intense." How would the other adventurers, including the members of the Swords of Darkness, see this? The best case scenario he could thought was them consoling Ainz with gentle eyes. Don't kill the Virtuous King of the Forest then, just capture it alive and ask what it knows.

"Nabe, stand back." Ainz finally gained some will to fight and gave an order. Narberal had an expression of absolute faith in Ainz's victory, bowing deeply before retreating to a corner of the open space. "Hmm… It is fine if both of you attack at the same time."

"…Two people ganging up on a hamster, I would never allow such shameless act." Seeing Ainz adopt a battle stance after saying that, the Virtuous King of the Forest lowered its posture and tensed its body: "Don't regret it! This king is coming!"

With a bang, the giant body kicked the ground with enough force to make the earth tremble, pouncing towards Ainz. The Virtuous King of the Forest pounced with its gigantic body, which would send normal people flying if they didn't use martial arts to counter. But Ainz used the giant sword as a shield and took the pounce head on. It was an incredibly powerful blow, but Ainz blocked it easily.

"Oh!" The Virtuous King of the Forest was surprised that Ainz didn't even take a single step back, and slashed with its unexpectedly sharp claws. Ainz parried it with the sword in his left hand while attacking with his right. It wasn't a powerful blow, but it was still a mighty strike. With a high-pitched sound, Ainz swing was deflected, numbing his arm. The Virtuous King of the Forest had defended Ainz blow with its claws. Both their attacks bounced back after colliding in the air.

"Impressive! How about this! 「Charm Species」!" Mental attacks were ineffective against the undead. Ignoring the spell, Ainz swung both swords at the same time. The clash of metal erupted again and Ainz's swords were deflected again. Ainz squinted the eyes under his helmet. He was just testing the waters, but the Virtuous King of the Forest deflected that strike with its fur. It was as tough as steel.

So its fur isn't soft? It was a bit unexpected, but Ainz shook the thought that shouldn't appear in the midst of battle out of his mind. Judging from the levels of Yggdrasil, Ainz estimated the physical attack power to be on par with a level 30 warrior. But that might be boosted by spells and equipment, so it couldn't be judged that way. But using that as a gauge, the battle power of the Virtuous King of the Forest was about level 30.

Ainz's illusionary face frowned: "Not bad… Suitable for close-combat practice." Ainz concluded he would definitely win the fight if he used his full power. He couldn't let his guard down, but it was good sword practice for a vanguard. Ainz swung the swords in his hands repeatedly while the Virtuous King of the Forest deftly parried the blows with the claws on its front feet… Another sigil on its body lit up as it activated another spell.

"「Blind」!" Unlike 'Charm Species', this wasn't a mental spell and was effective against Ainz. But since Ainz had a racial skill that nullified all low-level magic against him, the spell vanished

without causing any effects. *When it used magic earlier, a different sigil lit up on its body… So the number of sigils was equivalent to the number of spells it could use.*

For monsters that could cast spells in Yggdrasil, the number of spells it could cast were dependent on the level and racial type, but it was normally around 8. There were about 8 sigils on the Virtuous King of the Forest too, so Ainz felt as if he was fighting a monster in Yggdrasil. The Virtuous King of the Forest didn't notice that his spell was nullified and attack with its front legs. Ainz blocked using the giant sword in one hand while attacking with the other. He was reminded of fighting together with his comrades in the past.

In Yggdrasil, one of the strongest warriors that used a sword and shield was Touch Me. The one with the strongest attack, Nishiki Enrai, dual wielding the swords 'Amaterasu' and 'Tsukuyomi'. Claiming he didn't need a second attack, although that wasn't the truth, using the two tachi 'God Slayer Blade' and 'Takemikazuchi Mk. 8', warrior Takemikazuchi. He was also reminded of the warrior he met recently, the Warrior-Captain of the Kingdom, Gazef Stronoff. Ainz assumed the appearance of a warrior when he headed towards E-Rantel because he was inspired by that man.

Ainz rebuked himself for thinking about such things. *I shouldn't think about random stuff in the middle of a fight. I am doing well, but I can't let my guard down… Even if the opponent is a hamster…* The sword-attack movements his comrades used in the past appeared in Ainz's mind, and he attacked continuously while mimicking them. At the same time, Ainz blocked the counterattack of the Virtuous King of the Forest swiftly with the sword in his left hand. The fight turned into a stalemate before Ainz's giant sword finally broke through the Virtuous King of the Forest's defense.

"What!" With the sensation of the giant sword cutting into flesh, the stink of blood came out. The sword in his right hand slightly slashed through the skin of the Virtuous King of the Forest, sending some fur flying in the air. Ainz followed up with the sword in his left hand, but the Virtuous King of the Forest sensed the danger, leap backwards and retreated. It pulled about 10 meters away.

I heard hamsters would escape from its nest with a leap, but I didn't know they could jump backwards… As Ainz thought idly with the feeling of fighting a giant hamster, the Virtuous King of the Forest lowered its posture. Ainz looked at his foe in surprise. *What is it trying to do at this distance? If it tries to charge again, I would raise my sword and let it smash into its own ruin… But it was most probably casting another spell.* The coiled tail behind the Virtuous King of the Forest shouldn't be long enough to reach here—

"No, wrong!" Ainz realized his miscalculation. The first tail attack came from an even further distance. This was still within its attack range. As expected, the tail swung towards Ainz with a large arc. Ainz used the giant sword in his right hand to block and stared with his eyes wide open in surprise. The tail was using the sword as a pivot point to turn.

"!" Ainz flicked the sword to the side in order to shake off the tail, but he was a moment too slow, the tail loudly hit the back of Ainz's armor with a great impact. Because of his racial skills, Ainz didn't take much damage even though his armor was hit by the tail. But if this was an arcade shooting game, it would've been a slip up.

"Now the score is 1:1."

Just a mere hamster… The feeling of anger wells up. *I will use a ranged attack too.* Ainz decided as he increased the strength in his right hand. As Ainz was making preparation, the Virtuous King of the Forest said in awe: "Thy armor… Is really great. No, thy power and swordsmanship are impressive. Thou art a superb warrior. Were thee a famous figure among the society of men?"

Ainz relaxes his right hand. He asked with a hint of disappointment: "Do I look like a warrior?"

"…Why you thou ask that? If not a warrior, what else would thou be? No, perhaps a knight?"

"Virtuous King of the Forest… An undeserved title. The script had been a mess since I found out you were a giant hamster…" It was difficult to see Ainz, who was clad in full armor, as a magic caster. But with an impressive name like Virtuous King of the Forest, Ainz was hoping it could sense something was off. Nullifying magic was only seen as fending it off through strong force of will. The effect of resistance and nullification wasn't much different in Yggdrasil, but it should have acted more like a wise sage.

But the title of Virtuous King didn't fit him at all. If it was named giant Djungarian hamster from the very beginning, he wouldn't have gotten his hopes up. The people addressing it as virtuous king were the ones with the problem. It was misleading advertisement or branding. Ainz lost his will to fight and lowered his giant sword. "What art thou doing! It is probably impossible… Surrendering before the fight concludes? Fight this king with all your might! This is a battle to the death!"

Whenever the hot blooded Virtuous King of the Forest said something unexpected, Ainz would be hit psychologically. Since strong emotions would be suppressed, Ainz should still have some strength left. "Enough… Already." Ainz said in an icy tone, pointing the sword in his right hand at the Virtuous King of the Forest and activating his power.

Despair Aura V. Because the chance of causing instant death was too high, Ainz held back and only utilized the terror of level I. Air was emitted out with Ainz as the center, the chill that causes mental effects spread out around him. When it came into contact with the chill, the Virtuous King of the Forest's fur stood on end and it flip over at an amazing speed. The defenseless soft stomach full of silvery fur was exposed.

"This king surrenders! This king admits its loss!"

"…Ah… It's just an animal after all…" Ainz answered tiredly as he walked to the Virtuous King of the Forest's side, looking down at its defenseless belly and thinking of his next move. *It is a monster of this world so it would be a pity to chase it away. Too bad it's just a hamster, should I keep it as a pet… At most, its corpse would be of use.*

One of Ainz's job classes was necromancer. It was a class that enslaved corpses, but the strength of the zombie created was dependent on the race of the corpse. The best corpses would be powerful races like dragons while human corpses would turn into zombies or skeletons. What kind of undead would the Virtuous King of the Forest which doesn't exist in Yggdrasil turn into? Virtuous King of the Forest zombie?

"Want to kill it?" A bright voice came from behind. Ainz turned and saw Aura had suddenly appeared next to Narberal. "If you want to kill it, I want its skin. I think it would yield great

leather." Ainz looked down and met the teary eyes of the Virtuous King looking upwards. Its whiskers were trembling as it silently feared what its fate might be. He recalled his conversation with the Virtuous King of the Forest. It reminded him of his comrades. After hesitating, Ainz sighed and made a decision: "My real name is Ainz Ooal Gown. If you are willing to serve me, I will spare your life."

"Thank, thank you for your mercy! This king would repay you with my loyalty. The Virtuous King of the Forest will serve the great warrior Ainz Ooal Gown-sama!"

Aura looked with eyes of pity at the Virtuous King of the Forest declaring its fealty. After exiting the forest, the group hoping Ainz and Narberal would make it cheered their safe return. Only Lukeluther looked a little stunned. Nfirea asked Ainz with a mixture of surprise and praise: "No injuries at all… Did you avoid battle?" As Ainz was about to answer, Lukeluther interjected: "Momon-san, did you bring something back with you? Did you get bewitched?"

"I sparred with the Virtuous King of the Forest and tamed it. Hey, show yourself." The Virtuous King of the Forest with pearl white fur slowly came out of the forest. The Swords of Darkness members stood around Nfirea with a shocked expression, raising their swords and took a step back. *It might just be a Djungarian hamster, but it's so big…* Even though its beady eyes were cute, its gigantic size was still intimidating. It was natural of the adventurers to protect their client. Ainz lowered his volume and said: "Don't worry everyone. He has submitted to me and won't go berserk and harm people."

I approached the Virtuous King of the Forest and put on an act of caressing its body. "As my lord said, this Virtuous King of the Forest had sworn fealty to my lord and serves him as a vassal. I swear to my lord that I will not cause trouble for everyone!" The Virtuous King of the Forest declared its loyalty to Ainz once again. Everyone might be wary of its gigantic body, but it was originally a cute Djungarian hamster, they wouldn't be on guard after getting used to it. The problem was how to convince everyone this was the real Virtuous King of the Forest. Ainz was at a loss. But things didn't go the way Ainz imagined.

"…This is the Virtuous King of the Forest! Amazing, what a grand beast!"

What? Ainz switched his gaze between Ninya and the Virtuous King of the Forest, observing carefully to see if he was just teasing. But Ninya was serious. "…Wow, this Virtuous King of the Forest… Is as great as the legends! I can feel its tremendous power just by being in its presence!" Dyne said in awe.

Huh? Tremendous power?

"Ara, my hat is off to you. To accomplish such a grand feat. With such power, you are indeed qualified to bring Nabe-chan around with you."

"We would definitely be wiped out if we encounter such a monster. As expected of Momon-san. You are too good." Listening to the praise of Lukeluther and company, Ainz looked at the Virtuous King of the Forest once again. A gigantic Djungarian hamster. That's the only comment Ainz had. Why would they think this monster was threatening?

"…Everyone, don't you think the eyes of this monster are cute?" Everyone stared with eyes wide open when they heard this, as if their eyeballs were going to drop out. This probably sounded ridiculous to them. "Mo, Momon-san! You think the eyes of this monster are cute?" Of course. Ainz retorted in his mind as he nodded, wondering whether the Virtuous King of the Forest was activating its bewitching passive skill.

"Unbelievable, as expected of Momon-san. What do you think after looking at its eyes, Ninya?"

"…I think these eyes are full of wisdom and I could feel how powerful this monster is. No matter how lightly I could take it, I won't think of it as cute."

"…?" Ainz looked at everyone speechlessly. After understanding how everybody thought, he felt dizzy. "What about Nabe?"

"Its power aside, its eyes looked strong."

"…No… Way…"

Everyone was praising Ainz with shining eyes. This meant everyone felt respect towards Ainz who used describe the eyes of such a monster as cute. Ainz looked at the eyes of the Virtuous King of the Forest and couldn't see any 'wisdom'. *Did my ability to discern beauty change after turning into an undead?* Since everyone except him thought so, there was a possibility that his judgement had changed.

But he still needed a final confirmation: "By the way, does anybody think a rat is powerful?"

"Rat… Gigantic rats? Those monsters are nothing special."

"You can find them in the sewers of E-Rantel."

"Giant rats could spread horrible plague. And also ratmen… Ratmen are resistant to any weapon that is not made of silver, so they can be quite a handful."

Aren't hamsters and rats similar? And since the Virtuous King of the Forest has a long tail, it is closer to a rat than a hamster… The baffled Ainz came to the conclusion that 'this world is a bit weird'. While Ainz was troubled over the petty stuff about this world, Nfirea asked a bit worryingly:

"But if you take this monster away, the other monsters would have nothing to fear with the Virtuous King of the Forest's absence and attack En… Carne village?" Ainz gestured at the Virtuous King of the Forest with his chin. The Virtuous King of the Forest understood this and said: "Art thou referring to the village over there? Hmmm… The power balance in the forest has been overturned, even this king couldn't ensure its safety by staying here."

"How could this be…" Ainz didn't console the dejected Nfirea and just smiled in his heart. *The Virtuous King of the Forest isn't worthy of his title, but I can get something out of this.* As Ainz pondered how to guide the topic, he noticed Nfirea's gaze. Nfirea was opening his mouth, hesitant to speak up. It was obvious to Ainz that Nfirea's heart was conflicted… Nfirea wanted Ainz to save the village once again, but was hesitant about leaving everything to Ainz.

As the Swords of Darkness members discussed how to save the village, Nfirea made up his mind and spoke with a serious expression: “Momon-san.”

“What is it?” Ainz gleefully awaited Nfirea's words. Ainz had planned from the very beginning to protect Carne village, which was a rich source of information, but it was important to receive a request. Ainz could do a favor for Nfirea and get a reward, killing two birds with one stone. This was Ainz's plan, with this he wanted to make up for the mistake of miscalculating the Virtuous King of the Forest's worth. But Nfirea's words were beyond Ainz's imagination.

“Momon-san! Please allow me to join your party!”

“What?”

“I want to protect Enri… Carne village. But I don't have the power to defend it. So I want to become stronger! Even the basics would be fine, I hope Ainz-san could impart some of your powers to me! But my wealth couldn't employ an elite adventurer like Ainz-san in the long run! So please let me join your party! I am confident in pharmacy and I am willing to carry the luggage or do any chores! Please accept my request!”

As Ainz blinked his non-existent eyes in hesitation, Nfirea continued: “I have always been researching pharmaceutical studies. My grandmother and father were pharmacists, so I entered this career without much thought… But I found the path I want to take, something different from being a pharmacist.”

“You want to become a powerful magic caster and protect Carne village?”

“Yes.”

Nfirea looked at Ainz with sincere manly eyes, shaking off his childishness. During his time in Yggdrasil, there were plenty of people who wanted to join Ainz Ooal Gown. Most of them did this for their personal gain, wanting to get something out of joining a high-tier guild. They didn't think about what they could do for the guild, but what the guild could do for them.

Not only that, there were also treacherous people planning to infiltrate the guild to steal information and rare items. Because of this, the members of Ainz Ooal Gown maintained its core members and didn't grow much. They were guarded, careful to not let their efforts goes to waste. But Nfirea didn’t know about the guild Ainz Ooal Gown, he only had simple thoughts… This thought that seemed right, but was off the mark, gave Ainz a pleasant feeling.

“…Ha, hahaha!” Ainz laughed heartily. He didn’t hold anything back. Ainz then stopped his laughter, took off his helmet and bowed deeply with a sincere and serious attitude. He could hear Narberal gasping. This attitude might not be appropriate for Narberal’s master, the Overlord of the Great Tomb of Nazarick, but Ainz felt he should bow and did so without hesitation.

He didn’t think that bowing to a youth half his age was shameful. He didn’t mean any harm with his laughter, and Ainz knew he shouldn’t be laughing. He raised his head and told the shocked Nfirea: “…I apologize for losing my composure, but I hope you understand that I am not making fun of your resolve. You need to fulfil two criteria to join my team, but you only fulfilled one. It’s regrettable, but I can’t let you join.”

The hidden criteria was the consensus of half the members, so even though Ainz agreed, he couldn't recruit any members on his own. But since coming to this world, Ainz was filled with the joy of being treated with loyalty by the Guardians of Nazarick and continued: "I understand what you are thinking and will remember that you wanted to join my team. As for the protection of this village, I will do what I can to aid you. But I probably will need your help as well—"

"Yes! Please let me help!"

"I see, I see."

As Ainz nodded, his eyes met with Ninya's for a moment. Ninya looked as if he was seeing something interesting, which made Ainz felt awkward. "Let's talk about this later. Before that, I have to tell everyone about something interesting. Which is the taming of the Virtuous King of the Forest."

第四章 致命雙劍

Chapter 4: The Twin Swords of Death, Part 1

Taking one night to travel to Carne village, staying in Carne village for one night, then leaving for E-Rantel. The planned three days, two nights' journey was finally coming to its end, arriving back at E-Rantel, they were welcomed by the evening scene of the city. The road was illuminated by the white glow from the 'Continual Lights', the people travelling on the road also changed. Gone were the young women and children, most of them now were working men travelling home. Shop houses were lined side by side along the street, cheerful sounds and lights came from them.

Ainz looked around. After three days, the town didn't seem to have changed. No, after arriving in E-Rantel, he straight away left for Carne village the next day, so there was insufficient knowledge and attachment to compare. However, he could still feel that the scene of the calm streets remained unchanged. After reaching a turn on the main road, Ainz suddenly stopped walking. Normally, stopping in the middle of the road would definitely obstruct the path of other pedestrians, but nobody even complained. That was because nobody even got close to Ainz. Ainz hunched his back in resignation and observed the people around him.

Nearly everyone looked toward Ainz… No, they stared at Ainz, and whispered lowly to the person next to them. Hearing the sound of talking, Ainz felt as if they were laughing at him, but that was his own misunderstanding. If he had actually listened, he would know that their tones were filled with surprise, appreciation and fear. Even so, there was still a place that made it hard to release the tension.

Ainz silently looked down… Under him was pearly white fur. That was because Ainz was currently mounted on the Virtuous King of the Forest. All around the people looked towards the awe-inspiring brave appearance of the Virtuous King of the Forest — Ainz was somewhat critical of this point — in amazement, they were talking about the warrior who was able to ride upon such a fearful, yet dignified magical beast.

I should be able to hold my head high… Right… Completely understanding the situation. The people here showed approval of the majestic appearance of the Virtuous King of the Forest, but for Ainz, this was already approaching something like a punishment game. To put it in other words, it was like not having any family or girlfriend as a partner, sitting on a carousel with a deadpan look, looking towards an uncle in loneliness.

His riding posture was also quite unsightly. Because the Virtuous King of the Forest was completely different from a horse, Ainz's butt would point outwards while riding and he had to spread his legs wide. If he didn't assume this posture similar to jumping over a box, it would be difficult for him to maintain his balance.

Therefore, this idea of riding the Virtuous King of the Forest, was definitely not an idea that Ainz thought of himself. In addition to the persuasion from the Swords of Darkness members and the Virtuous King of the Forest himself, Narberal also politely said "It would be too much for a ruler to walk." which made him think that riding it wouldn't be such a bad idea, thus ending up with this result.

If I had known, I would have rejected the idea. Shouldn't be that someone wanted to set me up, thus setting this trap… It looked like a hamster, as if coming out of a fairy tale, but it would only be suitable for boys and girls to ride upon. Even as a slight compromise, a woman riding it would also be alright. But it definitely wasn't right for a warrior to ride upon it. But the surrounding people thought the only one with a strange reaction was Ainz.

Is it a problem with my own aesthetic views, their aesthetic views, or with this world's aesthetic views? Of course, the answer went without saying. As long as the majority thought it was beautiful, then the one with the wrong aesthetic view must be Ainz. Because of this, he did not strongly oppose to riding the Virtuous King of the Forest. Also, if he could let the name of Momon the adventurer become even more impressive, and gain a more solid position, then it would be even harder to reject the idea. But still—

This is simply a shame play… Ainz's emotions would immediately be repressed once they reached a certain point, but up till now, there was no such feeling, which meant there wasn't too much embarrassment. This result only told Ainz one thing. *Does this mean that I have developed some immunity to shame play… I couldn't be an M, right…? I always felt I was more of an S…*

"Now that we have returned to town, our job has come to an end." Replaying the scenes and still images of his past, Ainz compared them to his current mental state and agonized over his own fetishes. While doing that, Nfirea chatted with Peter. "Yes, you are right, with this your job is over. Then… Although I am ready to pay the agreed reward, but… To also pay the additional reward that we spoke of in the forest, would it be alright if you come over to the shop at my home?"

The rear of Nfirea's carriage was filled to the brim with many herbs. Not only that, but also some timber, some fruits that grew to look like branches, a huge mushroom large enough to cover a person and a variety of very tall grass. If seen by a layman, they would feel that these were just many simple plants, however for an expert, this was a shining jeweled mountain.

These were all from the time when Ainz tamed the Virtuous King of the Forest, this allowed them to safely explore his domain. In there they found a variety of precious herbs and many other herbs that could be used to make potions, Nfirea who harvested non-stop agreed to give them an additional amount of money for it.

"Momon-san should first go visit the Adventurer's Guild!"

"Eh, that's right. Because I brought a magical beast into the city, I need to register the Virtuous King of the Forest in the Adventurer's Guild."

"Although it is troublesome, but there is no choice."

"We also mopped up the ogres and other monsters together, how about it? Why don't we head to the Adventurer's Guild together?"

"Well… No, this time we mostly relied on Momon-san, we will head to Nfirea-san's home first, at least we will help with some chores or move some of the herbs. Otherwise to receive the same reward as Momon-san would be unjustified."

The Swords of Darkness members all nodded in response to Peter's remarks, but Nfirea politely interrupted: "There's no need to trouble yourselves…"

"Because there is an additional reward, let us give you this free service." Hearing Peter's joking words, Nfirea also respectfully said: "Then, the next time you come to my store to buy potions, I will give you a discount."

"That would be really great. Momon-san, you should go to the Adventurer's Guild first and then head over to Nfirea's home. We will go there first, and after doing some chores we will head back to the Adventurer's Guild to settle the formalities. Because we have to wait until tomorrow before going to the Adventurer's Guild to receive our reward for the ogre extermination, I'm sorry that we will have to trouble you to make another trip to there tomorrow… The time we meet should be the same as the time when we first met."

"Understood." Faced with this proposal, Ainz nodded in relief. Registering just requires one to just calmly go up to the counter and asking, he did not want to go with them to the Adventurer's Guild, faced with the dilemma of "Please write this" and "Please look at this". That had the chance of causing all his previous effort to go to waste. "Then, sorry to trouble you."

Gently nodding his head while riding on the Virtuous King of the Forest, and separating from Nfirea and the members of the Swords of Darkness, with only Narberal as his partner, they moved towards the Adventurer's Guild. This time Narberal leaned over and asked: "Can we believe them?"

"…No big deal. Even if we are betrayed, the loss is just the reward for exterminating some ogres. If we worried ourselves over this small amount of money, we would be considered stingy, and that would be an even larger loss."

Ainz came to this city in order to increase his fame, to be considered petty would hinder his future plans. Putting up a false front. Thinking about that phrase, Ainz touched the money bag on his chest and with one pinch he felt a few coins: it was easy to know how much was left. But it should be enough to pay for accommodations for two tonight.

If he considered adding in the costs of meals, he might not have enough, but considering that Ainz is an undead, and the ring on Narberal's hand contained a magic that allowed her to go without food, in terms of cost, that was a huge contribution. Narberal was able to wear two rings, one of those was this ring, and its original purpose was to prevent eating poisoned food, never thought it would contribute in such a way now.

However, while looking at the Virtuous King of the Forest he was riding, his heart thought "This guy must always eat something." and Narberal once again said: "Indeed… It is strange that the most supreme Ainz-sama would be left with so little money. How rude."

"Well…" Ainz once again touched his money bag, feeling that his back who could not sweat was seeping with sweat. He cursed himself for raising the threshold when there was no need. Also… *Ainz-sama… Stop calling me that Narberal. If no one heard it that would be great…*

He felt helpless in his heart, while Narberal still joyfully said: "These lower life forms (mosquito), are all prostrating themselves to Ainz-sama's astonishing strength."

"It hasn't reached that stage yet."

"Too modest. Although in the eyes of Ainz-sama, those ogres were nothing more than insects, but Ainz-sama's sword skills were at another level, truly admirable." Below him, the Virtuous King of the Forest shook strangely, but Ainz paid it no mind, towards Narberal he said: "…It was just playing around with brute force."

It sounded like he said that to make himself sound cool, but that was not so. When he saw Gazef fight, Ainz saw his smooth moves, but when Ainz thought back about his own movements, he felt like he was a child wildly flailing around his sword, how unsightly. Their praise was only directed to the destructive power brought about by his arm. It was completely different from the praise to a true warrior like Gazef. "Moving around like a true warrior is actually really difficult."

"…Then how about using magic to turn into a warrior?"

While wearing armor, he was still able to use around five different types of magic, one of those was the ability to convert his magic caster levels to warrior levels. Meaning that if Ainz used that magic, he could temporarily turn into a level 100 warrior. Although the advantage was being able to use certain equipment of the other job, the disadvantages are also big.

Firstly, during that time he would be unable to use any magic, and once he turned into a warrior he wouldn't have any special skills. His recalculated stats would also be very low for a warrior. Simply said, he would be a half-baked level 100 warrior. It would be another story if both he and a High Priest fought using only swords, but for him to go against another warrior of the same job, there was no chance of winning. Even so, it would be stronger than the current Ainz. Problem was—

"There are too many disadvantages. If an opponent of the same level does a surprise attack on me, then I won't be able to use magic in such a short time, which will lead to my certain defeat. Even if I use magic scrolls, considering the preparation time and so on, there are still too many disadvantages."

Right now it was still unknown whether there were any hostile players or not, they must not be taken lightly. There was no need to specifically use that magic, and create weaknesses for himself. "Being a warrior is just an act to hide my identity, there is no need to feel bad about it."

"!" The body of the Virtuous King of the Forest shook a bit and with a surprised look he tilted his head up to look at Ainz: "This underling has been listening from the beginning, isn't master a warrior?" Returning its look, Ainz gave a quiet nod and Narberal explained with a condescending tone: "Ainz-sama is only pretending to be a warrior, just like playing a game. If he used his real strength in magic, Armageddon would just be a small matter."

Faced with such absolute trust, or thinking that this was just natural of Narberal, Ainz was unable to say the words "Impossible" in response. "…. Well, it's probably like that. Virtuous King of the Forest, aren't you glad you did not fight the real me in battle? If I had used my real strength, you would've been unable to survive even for a second."

"Th-that is so, master. Your humble servant, Hamsuke, once again pledges his undying loyalty to you!"

When the Virtuous King of the Forest said he wanted a name, the name that floated into Ainz's mind was Hamsuke. After receiving the name Hamsuke, the Virtuous King of the Forest was also very satisfied with his name. But after calmly considering, the name Hamsuke really has no taste at all. *…The name, Hamsuke, was decided too much in a hurry. Maybe Mochi… Would be more entertaining… My companions had mentioned before that I am unable to think of good names…* Feeling some regret, Ainz who was sitting on the back of the Virtuous King of the Forest, Hamsuke, slowly wobbled to the Adventurer's Guild.

♦ ♦ ♦

The carriage moved directly into the backyard of the home, stopping in front of the backdoor. Picking up the magic lantern, Nfirea jumped off the carriage's front seat and opened the door. Hanging the lantern in his hand on the wall, illuminating the dark room. Because of the light, it was possible to see a few buckets inside the room. The smell of dry herbs came from the room, indicating that this was a place used to keep herbs.

"Then, sorry to trouble you, but could you help transporting the herbs over?" Readily replying, the Swords of Darkness members carefully transported a bundle of herbs from the carriage to the house. Guiding the placement of the herbs, a question emerged from Nfirea's heart: "Is grandma not home?"

Despite Nfirea's grandmother being of an old age, her hearing and eyesight were not bad, she would have heard the sounds of things being transported and come outside. However, if she was too concentrated on the creation of her potions, then she would not pay any attention to any small noises. Feeling as if this was the usual, Nfirea did not shout out in a loud voice.

Waiting until all the herbs were placed in their appropriate locations, Nfirea called out to some of the Swords of Darkness members: "Good work! There should be some ice cold juice in the house, please go ahead and drink it."

"That would be great." Lukeluther said, his forehead sweating slightly. The rest happily nodded their heads. "Then, this way please." Nfirea led everyone towards his home, then suddenly someone opened the door from the other side. "Hey~ Welcome back~" In front of their eyes stood a lovely woman, but she gave off a vague sense of unease. Her short blonde hair swaying. "Aiya~ I was worried you know? I thought you went missing. How unlucky~ I had no idea when you would come back, so I was just waiting here all this while."

"…Ma-May I ask who you are?"

"Hey! Don't you all recognize me?" Because of the intimate tone, as if the two of them were acquaintances, Peter let out a sound of surprise.

"Eh? Hahaha~ I came to kidnap you~ we require someone to use a magic artefact to summon a large number of undead, the 'Undead Legion', so could you become my toy? Onee-chan is asking you a favor, please?" The Swords of Darkness members feeling this woman's evil atmosphere, immediately pulled out their weapons.

Even in the fact of an impending battle, the woman still said in a frivolous tone: "That is a 7th tier spell that is very hard for people to use, but through the use of the crown it can be achieved.

Although it is still not possible to control all the undead, but it can still influence them! What a flawless plan~! Perfect~!"

"…Nfirea-san, retreat! Quickly leave this place." Wielding his weapon while being wary of the woman, Peter said in a serious tone: "That woman won't stop talking, she must be confident about dealing with us. Since you are her target, the only way to reverse the situation is for you to escape." The Swords of Darkness members used their bodies to shield the panicking Nfirea, standing in front of him.

"Ninya! You escape as well!" Following Dyne, Lukeluther also shouted: "Take the kid and run! Don't you still want to rescue your sister who was captured!?"

"Yes. You still have something to do. While we may not be able to help you in the end… At least we can buy you some time."

"Everyone…"

"Hey~ How heart-warming~ I almost want to cry, eh. But if he escapes it would be a bother. At least leave one person for me to play with~"

Seeing Ninya's tightly pursed lips, with an appearance of not knowing what to do, the woman showed a joyful smile, slowly taking out her stiletto from within her robe. At this moment, from behind the back door came a few pale scrawny men. Realizing this, the faces of all of the Swords of Darkness members became serious.

"…Playtime is over."

"Hey~ what are you saying, Khajit-chan. Weren't you all helping me prepare, helping me ensure that the screams don't leak outside? But since it's just one person, please let me have some fun." Her toothy laugh made Nfirea's hair stand on ends. "Well now that there is no way to escape, let us begin~"

Chapter 4: The Twin Swords of Death, Part 2

The registration for Hamsuke was simple, but it still took an hour and a half to complete. The most time consuming was sketching a portrait of Hamsuke. It could've been done much faster with magic, but Ainz didn't want to spend the money, which was why it took so long. To avoid being viewed by others as being petty, Ainz made up an excuse. "It's a bit late to say so, but 'being interested in drawing' was a tedious excuse… But never mind. I should head over there now." Ainz, who had finished the registration, said so to Narberal who was standing by the entrance of the guild, and he then walked towards Hamsuke.

He had gotten used to it. Carousels weren't exclusive for the winners in life — people with a significant other or kids — so it shouldn't be a problem for a lonely old man to sit on it. Ainz, who had given up, showed no hesitation in his actions. He used his high agility and mounted the Virtuous King of the Forest like a famed gymnast.

Although there wasn't any supporting equipment like a saddle, a few hours of experience was enough for Ainz to master riding techniques. The pedestrians who saw the scene sighed in admiration. There were even squeals from the ladies. The eyes of the adventurers were exceptionally passionate. After confirming the type of medal on Ainz's neck, they had a face of disbelief. *I am the one who has a hard time believing this. What happened to everyone's sense of aesthetic?*

Someone called out to Ainz, who was retorting the crowd in his heart and ordering Hamsuke to leave. "Hey, are you the person who went to harvest herbs with my grandson?" Ainz heard an elderly voice addressed him, turned his head to find an old lady. "…Who might you be?" Ainz asked although he already guessed the answer. If what the old lady said was true, there is only one answer. "I am Lizzie Bareare, grandmother of Nfirea."

"Ah! So it is you? You are correct, I escorted Nfirea to Carne village, my name is Momon. This is Narberal."

Lizzie compliments Narberal who bowed respectfully: "What an unbelievably beautiful girl. What is the monster you are riding known as?"

"This is the Virtuous King of the Forest."

"This king is Hamsuke! Pleased to meet you!"

"What! This fearsome monster is the legendary Virtuous King of the Forest!?" When the adventurers who were eavesdropping nearby heard Lizzie's exclamation, all of them had a look of surprise. They seemed quite shaken as they whispered things like 'That is the legendary monster?' "Yes, as requested by your grandson, I tamed it after an encounter at the destination."

"To… Tame the Virtuous King of the Forest…" Lizzie stuttered: "Well… Where is my grandson?"

"Ah, he returned with the herbs. We are on our way over to claim the reward."

The old lady who breathed a sigh of relief looked at Ainz with amazed eyes and asked: “Oh, I see… Want to go together? I am curious about your adventures.” Lizzie’s suggestion was a great help for Ainz. “Yes, it would be my pleasure.” With Lizzie leading the way, the group walked through the city of E-Rantel. “Please come on in.” After reaching the shop, Lizzie took out her key and lowered her head. She pushed the door and found it opening without any resistance.

“What’s happening, he is too careless.” Lizzie mumbled to herself as she entered with Ainz and Narberal in toll. “Nfirea, Momon-san is here—”, Lizzie shouted in the shop, it was quiet without any sign of people. “Is something wrong?” Lizzie tilted her head confusedly but Ainz answered curtly: “This is bad.” Lizzie was baffled, but Ainz ignored her and placed his hand on the hilt of his sword. Narberal understood what Ainz meant and unsheathed her blade.

“What, what are you doing!?”

“Don’t ask, just follow me.” Ainz drew his weapon after the short reply, entering with his sword in hand. He knocked the door inside open and headed towards the right. It was an unfamiliar house, but Ainz showed no hesitation in his footsteps. Ainz came before the door at the end of the passageway and asked Lizzie who finally caught up: “What is this place for?”

“This is the storage room for herbs, and a door that leads towards the back door.” Although she didn’t know what would happen, Lizzie who felt the atmosphere was weird was worried.

Ainz didn’t bother himself with her and opened the door. What he smelled wasn’t the fragrance of herbs, but something more stinging… The smell of blood. The ones at the front were Peter and Lukeluther, Dyne was further back and Ninya was at the furthest end. All four were leaning lifelessly against the wall. Their legs were straight and their hands were hanging limply. A dark pool of black blood was on the floor, which seemed to have drained from their bodies. “What, what is happening…” The surprised Lizzie wanted to enter with unsteady steps.

Ainz stopped her with a hand on her shoulder and he rushed into the room. The collapsed Peter suddenly moved like a puppet, but before it could get up, the flash from a sword went by without hesitation. Peter’s head rolled on the ground. With a backhand cut, Lukeluther who was attempting to stand was also decapitated.

As Lizzie was stunned by the tragedy before her, Dyne who was situated further in had stood up. His face showed no signs of life and was pale. It looked at Ainz and Lizzie with murky eyes. There was a hole in his forehead which was obviously a fatal wound. There was only one reason why the dead could move. When they become an undead.

“Zombie!” As Lizzie shouted, Dyne drew near with a hostile grunt. Ainz immediately stabbed with his sword. It pierced Dyne’s throat and he staggered for a moment before collapsing. There was no other movement. Ainz stared at Ninya who sat motionlessly on the ground in silence.

“Nfirea!” Lizzie finally realized what was happening and rushed out to search for her grandson. Ainz glanced at her back and ordered Narberal: “Protect her. My passive skill ‘Undead Blessing’ has no reaction, so there shouldn’t be any other undead in this house. But there might be live ones hiding somewhere.”

“Understood.” Narberal took off after Lizzie after bowing lightly.

Ainz confirmed the departure of the two of them and turned his eyes on Ninya. He slowly knelt down and gently touched the body. After confirming there was no corpse trap which was common in Yggdrasil, he lifted Ninya's face. Ninya wasn't unconscious, but dead.

His face was swollen, probably from the blows of a blunt weapon. Ainz couldn't recognize him by his face. His left eye was smashed and flowed out of the socket like a tear. All the bones in his fingers were cracked and the skin split open, revealing the red muscle within. Some places didn't even have meat.

When Ainz removed the clothes for inspection, he was shocked with his eyes wide open. He put the clothes back in place and mumbled: "…Even the body was…" The body was similar to the face, with wounds everywhere due to severe bleeding. It was covered with the color of internal hemorrhage and it was harder to find a spot that wasn't wounded. Ainz closed Ninya's eyes gently. "…It makes me feel… Uncomfortable." His mumbling words were gone with the wind.

"My grandson! Nfirea is gone!" Lizzie screamed when she returned. Ainz who gathered the corpses in a corner of the room replied calmly: "…I took a look at their belongings, there were no signs of them being searched. Judging from this, the enemy's objective was to kidnap Nfirea."

"Ugh!"

"Please look this way." Ainz gestured to the bloody words under Ninya's body. They wouldn't have been discovered if the body weren't moved.

"This is… The sewers? It means Nfirea had been taken to the sewers?"

"…It might also be a trap made by the one behind this tragedy. I have no idea how large the sewers are… It would take a lot of time to search it. What are your opinions about this?"

"There are numbers here too! 2-8, what does this mean!?"

"This makes it even more suspicious. I don't know what these numbers mean… It could be dividing the city into 8 parts along the compass axis and the intersection of 2 and 8, or some sort of address… Did Ninya really have enough strength left to think so complicatedly? …Even if Ninya wrote it, how much information was leaked by the enemy? This is too much of a coincidence."

Lizzie frowned her already wrinkled face, and looked as if she was angry with Ainz's surprisingly calm demeanor. She then shifted her gaze to the four corpses on the ground: "Who were these people?"

"…They were adventurers commissioned along with me by your grandson. After we parted, they probably came here to unload the herbs."

"What! They were your comrades!?"

Ainz shook his head: "No, they were not. We just happened to be adventuring together." These cold words made Lizzie disillusioned. "Speaking of which, I had been thinking about this, but I would like to ask your opinion. What do you think about them turning into zombies?"

"…'Create Undead'. The enemy has someone who could use magic of at least the 3rd tier. What other possibilities were there?"

"I think we should deal with this promptly."

"Isn't that obvious… What do you want to say?"

"…The enemy could have used either mind control or hide the bodies, but they didn't. They only did something like this for their own amusement. They either didn't care about being exposed or had absolute confidence in escaping. Hmm… I don't know which one it is. Since they could turn corpses into zombies, they should be able to bring them back with them right?"

If the goal was to kidnap Nfirea, they could buy enough time to escape just by hiding the bodies. But they didn't do that, meaning they were planning something else, or wanted Lizzie to do something. The latter would be easier to deal with, but it would be troublesome if it was the former.

Nfirea's life and innate ability was valuable, but might not be useful for long. Would those merciless criminals let Nfirea go safely after utilizing him? Lizzie who understood what Ainz meant turned from green to white. She didn't know where in this big city he was kidnapped to, but it would take too long to search. The only clue was the sewers, but Ainz had doubts about it. Nfirea's lifeline was diminishing with each passing second.

Ainz said calmly to the tense Lizzie: "How about commissioning a rescue party?" The calm voice continued: "Isn't this something you should request of an adventurer?" Lizzie's eyes shined, she seemed to understand what Ainz was getting at. "You are lucky, Lizzie Bareare. Before you is the strongest adventurer in the city, and the only one who could bring your grandson back safely. If you commission this job to me, I will accept it. But… the price is very heavy, because I understand how hard this job is."

"Indeed… If it is you… The one with that potion… Tamer of the Virtuous King of the Forest, there is no question that you're strong… Hire, I want to hire you!"

"Is that so… Are you prepared to pay this heavy price?"

"How much would satisfy you?"

"Everything."

"What?"

"Give me everything you have."

Lizzie stared with her eyes wide open in surprised and trembled. "Your everything. If Nfirea returns safely, give all that you have to me."

"You…" Lizzie back away from fear and said in a soft voice: "When you say everything… It doesn't mean money or rare potions… I heard the devil would grant any wish in exchange for human soul. Are you a devil?"

"…Even if I am, it doesn't matter, does it? Do you want to save your grandson?" Lizzie was silent, and nodded as she bit her lips.

"Then there is only one answer right?"

"Yes… I will hire you. I will offer everything to you, so save my grandson!"

"Good, the contract is agreed on. Let's make haste, do you have a map of this city? Lend it to me if you have one." Lizzie felt it was bizarre, but she immediately took out a map and handed it to Ainz. "Next would be finding where Nfirea is."

"You can do that!?"

"I have to use this method. I am not sure if the enemy is dumb or…" Ainz didn't finish and just shifted his gaze to the 4 bodies in the room.

"I will start searching now, go to the other rooms and look for clues, see if the people who kidnapped Nfirea left anything behind. If kidnapping Nfirea is also a diversion, then things will be bad. You are more familiar with the house and better suited for this." After chasing Lizzie out with a random reason, Ainz turned to Narberal.

"What does my liege plan to do?"

"Simple. Look, all their medals are gone, probably taken by the one who attacked them. The question is why they didn't take something more valuable, but just the medals… What do you think?"

"My apologies, I have no idea."

"That is because—", Ainz heard a sound in his mind when he was talking halfway. It was a 'Message'.

『Ainz-sama.』 The voice was a bit excited, and the sound of buzzing could also be heard. "Is this Entoma?"

『Yes.』 Entoma Vasilissa Zeta. A battlemaid just like Narberal. 『I have something to report.』

"I am busy right now. I will contact you when I am free."

『By your command. Please contact Albedo-sama when you are available.』

The spell dissipated and Ainz continued the discussion with Narberal: "As a trophy, a prize of the hunt. The perpetrator probably took it as a memento. But that was a devastating mistake. Narberal, activate the spell." Ainz took a scroll from his magic bag and gave it to Narberal. "This is a scroll of 'Locate Item'. You know what the target is right?"

"Understood."

Narberal who acknowledged opened the scroll. When she was about to activate the spell, Ainz grabbed her hand and lectured the surprised Narberal coldly: "…Stupid." The cold scolding made Narberal's shoulder tremble: "I, I'm sorry!"

"When using information gathering spells, you need to be prepared for counter spells of the enemy before casting it, this is the ironclad rule. Keeping in mind that the opponent might use 'Detect Location', the basics of the basics would be using 'False Information' and 'Anti-Detection' to protect yourself. Also—"

Ainz prepared 10 scrolls, and explained each one to Narberal like a teacher. When using information collecting spells, you had to make the necessary precautions. Those were the basics. When Ainz Ooal Gown PKed, they would collect every information available about the opposition and settle it in one sneak attack.

This was the 'the battle is concluded before it even started' dogma of the guild member Punitto Moe, who came up with the basic strategy for the guild, 'PK can be performed by anyone easily'. That's why Ainz taught Narberal the basics too, so when they encounter other players in the future, they could gain the upper hand in battle.

"That's all. Normally a special ability should be used to strengthen it as well for insurance, but there shouldn't be a need to go that far for the enemy this time. If they had thought of more ways to deal with magic casters, they wouldn't had cast that level of spell on the corpse. Well then, let's begin Narberal." Narberal who was finally unleashed opened the scrolls in order and chanted the magic written on the scrolls. Flames that weren't hot emerged from the scroll and burned it to a crisp in seconds, releasing the magic sealed inside it.

After expending all the scrolls' magic, Narberal who was protected by numerous defensive spells finally activated 'Locate Item'. She pointed to a spot on the map: "It's here." Ainz who couldn't read searched his memories to deduce what that place was. "…Cemetery. The chance of it not being the sewers were high indeed." E-Rantel was a military base and that cemetery was unbelievably huge. The spell indicated the deepest spot of the cemetery.

"I see, next would be using 'Far-sight' and 'Crystal Screen' together, so I can see the scene over there too." Narberal activated more scrolls, and the screen that appeared in mid-air showed countless figures. But their movement seemed creepy and rigid. Not just that, there were also things that were clearly not human. In the middle of all that was a youth. The dressing was different, but Ainz wouldn't get it wrong.

"That is the place. The medals are in the vicinity… And a large mob of undead?" It was a huge group of undead. They were low-tier undead, but their numbers were frightening. "…What is my liege's will? Teleport and destroy them in one go? Or use flying magic to attack from the front?"

"Don't be silly. Wouldn't the problem be solved in the dark that way?"

Ainz explained to the confused Narberal: "To prepare so many undead, the opponents must be thinking of doing something big with them. Since we are going to rescue Nfirea, we will resolve this crisis on the way there to raise our fame. Taking care of the problem in the dark would only get us Lizzie's reward and would be unlikely to raise our fame."

That might be so, but if they didn't resolve it as soon as possible, Nfirea might die. Even Ainz couldn't summon and manipulate so many undead in one go, so there must be some sort of trick to this. Nfirea's presence might be the crucial piece of that trick. If that was the case, Ainz wanted to find out the secret behind the trick even if he had to sacrifice Nfirea. For Ainz, the most important goal was how to strengthen the Great Tomb of Nazarick. If sacrificing Nfirea could do that, Ainz would have no choice but to do so.

"I want to collect more information, but there isn't enough preparation time." Ainz mumbled as he walked to the front entrance, and hollered as he opens the door. "Lizzie! The preparations are done. We are heading to the cemetery!"

"What about the sewers?" The voice came from afar, and Lizzie rushed over. "The sewers are just a diversion by the enemy, the real location is the cemetery. And there is an army of undead, numbering easily in the thousands."

"What!"

It was just an estimate; how could it be possible to count accurately. "Don't be surprised, we will be heading straight for the goal. The problem is that I can't guarantee the undead army won't spill out from the cemetery. Try to tell everyone about this, ask them to fend off the undead that wander out of the cemetery. This information lacks evidence, but since it's a request from a renowned person like you, people should be willing to listen right? If the undead came out of the cemetery and no one is prepared… Things would be bad."

Ainz's face under the helmet smirked. *It would be troubling for me if they don't make it a big deal. The bigger this gets, the greater the fame I will receive from resolving the crisis. That's why I am doing this.* "That's all I want to say. Time is of the essence, so I will be heading there now."

"You have a way to break through the undead army?" Ainz looked at Lizzie as he pointed to the swords on his back: "The way is right here."

Chapter 4: The Twin Swords of Death, Part 3

A quarter of E-Rantel's city walls was used to surround an enormous area, which took up half of the city's western district. That was the public cemetery of E-Rantel. There were cemeteries in other cities too, but not one of such a scale. That was in order to suppress the rising undead. There were still many unknowns regarding why the undead rose, but unclean things tend to sprout from places where the living met their end. The probability of the undead rising was higher for those who were killed and those who were not mourned. Hence, it was common to find undead in places like battlefield and ruins.

E-Rantel which is situated near the Empire's battlefield needed a gigantic cemetery to prevent the undead from rising, a place for people to pay tribute to the dead. For this part, it was the same for the neighboring nation, the Empire. They also had an agreement to pay tribute to the dead during the war. Even though they were fighting each other, they still see the undead that assault the living as a common enemy. Apart from that, the undead posed another problem. If you left alone, they might produce stronger undead. That's why the adventurers and guards will patrol the cemetery every night and destroy the undead while they were still weak.

The cemetery was surrounded by a wall, and this wall was the line separating the living from the dead. The 4-meter-high walls couldn't compare to a siege wall, but it was enough for people to walk on top of it. The gate was secured and sturdy, it definitely was not easy to break down. This was all done to guard against the undead that rose in the cemetery. There were staircases to either side of the door and an observation tower was erected beside the wall. Each shift consisted of five men, they yawned as they took turns to watch over the cemetery.

The cemetery was illuminated by a lamp post enchanted with 'Continual Light', so it was bright despite being night. But there were still dark areas, and the tomb stones obscured the view as well. A guard holding a spear looked over the cemetery absentmindedly, yawning as he said to his watch companion: "It's quiet tonight too."

"Yup, there were five skeletons just now right? Compared to the rate of their appearance in the past, that's almost nothing."

"Yeah, were the spirits of the dead summoned back by the Six Gods? That would be great."

The other guards were intrigued by this topic and joined in: "We can handle skeletons and zombies, but it is hard to take down skeletons with spears, so it is troublesome."

"I think wights are the hardest to handle."

"Centipede skeletons for me. If the adventurers patrolling nearby didn't come to assist, I would already be dead."

"Centipede skeletons? I heard that if you leave the weak ones alone, stronger undead would spawn. If we kill them while they are weak, the strong ones won't spawn."

"Yes, absolutely true. The team that patrolled last week was lectured viciously by our team captain. The wine they offered as an apology was great, but I don't want to ever experience that again."

"But… If you think about it, the undead not showing up could mean trouble."

"…Why?"

"Well, it feels like our surveillance is missing something."

"You think too much, normally there won't be so many undead. I heard that the undead rise frequently after burying the bodies of those who were killed in battle against the Empire. Conversely, this is how it is without war right?"

The guards nodded to acknowledge this theory. Although the villages in other areas also bury their dead, they had never heard of such frequent spawning of the undead there. "…Now you mention it, the situation in Kattse plains went out of hand."

"Yup, I heard incredibly strong undead spawned there right?"

The plains where the Empire and the Kingdom clashed. That place was a famous zone where the undead roamed. The adventurers commissioned by the Kingdom and the knights of the Empire exterminate the undead there frequently. The importance of this job prompted the support division of the Kingdom and the Empire to set up a small town there. "I heard—"

The guard who was about to speak stopped suddenly. The other guard who felt uneasy because of this said: "Hey, don't—"

"Quiet!" The guard who stopped speaking seemed to be able to see through the dark and stared at the cemetery. Affected by this action, the other guards looked towards the cemetery. "…Did you hear that?"

"Was it your imagination?"

"I didn't hear anything… But I smell soil. Didn't we dig a grave recently? It smells just like that…"

"Don't joke like that."

"…Huh? Ah, hey! Look over there!"

A guard pointed towards the cemetery. Everyone focused on that spot. Two guards were sprinting towards the main gate. They were out of breath and their wide open eyes were bloodshot. Their sweat-stained hair stuck to their forehead. The scene before them made the guards feel something was wrong. The guards patrolling the cemetery moved in groups of ten. Why were there just two? They were running without weapons and seemed to be running for their lives.

"Quick, open the gate! Open the gate now!" Seeing the way these two were screaming, the guards ran down the stairs and opened the gate in a hurry. The two guards scampered in without waiting for the gate to fully open. "What in the…" The two guards interrupted while panting with a pale face: "Quick, close the gate! Hurry!" All the guards got goose bumps looking at their unusual actions, closing the gate together and placing the bolt in place.

“What happened? Where are the others?” Hearing this question, the guard lift his head and had a shocked expression. “They, they were eaten by the undead!” Hearing that 8 comrades had fallen, the guards looked to their captain. The captain immediately ordered: “…Hey, someone get up there and take a look!” A guard climbed the stairs and stopped when he got half way up. “What, what is it!” The trembling guard shouted: “Undead! A huge mob of undead!”

Straining their ears, they could hear sounds like a stampede of horses coming from the other side of the wall. Not just the guard that first sighted them, all the guards present were dumbstruck by the scene before them. A mind numbing number of undead were advancing towards the gate. “What is with these numbers…”

“It’s more than a hundred or two… There could be thousands…”

There were countless undead in places the light didn’t shine, it’s hard to gauge the actual number if you include the figures wriggling in the darkness. With their rotten stench the innumerable undead closed in on the gate with unsteady steps like a dark cloud. Not just zombies and skeletons, there were a few strong undead mixed in like ghouls, devourers, wights, bloaters, carrion crawlers etc.

The guards trembled in fear. The city was protected by the walls, the undead couldn’t attack normal citizens without breaking through the walls. But even if they mobilize all the guards, it was uncertain if they could keep such a large group of undead at bay. The guards are just commoners wearing defensive gear, they didn’t have the confidence to exterminate all these undead.

Not just that, some undead could even turn the people they kill into their own kind. If things went bad, the guards might even be turned into an undead and start attacking their comrades. No flying undead were sighted yet, but if they didn’t take care of this soon, it would only be a matter of time before vicious undead able to take flight spawned. This made the guards even more terrified.

The wave of undead washed to the walls. *Bang bang*. The swarm of low-intelligence undead couldn’t feel pain and bashed the door haphazardly. They seemed to realize they could attack the living after breaking down this door. *Bang bang*. The banging sound, the creaks of the door bending under the pushing force and the moans of the undead kept coming. With no need for brakes, the undead who didn’t mind shattering under the brunt of the impact were like a siege weapon. The guards witnessing this sight were breaking out in cold sweat.

“Sound the bell! Request reinforcement from the guard post! The two of you inform the other gates of the emergency!” The captain issued the orders after getting hold of himself: “The ones behind use spears to attack the undead that approach the gate!” The guards remembered their duties when they heard the orders, thrusting their spears hard at the undead below. The mass of undead flooding the ground was easily hit. Thrust, pull back and thrust again. Murky blood and the rotten stench numbed the noses of the guards who repeated the same action like a factory worker.

Several undead lost their negative life force, and got trampled by the undead behind them after they fell. The undead lack intelligence, so they didn’t fight back against the guard’s repeated spear

attacks. Repeating the same motion made the guards lose their sense of danger. As if it was aiming for this moment—

"Wahh!" There was a scream and when they looked toward the source, the neck of a guard was entangled by something long and squirming. It was a smooth and pink, an intestine. An egg shaped undead stood at the place the intestine came from. In front of it was a wide gap with the organs of several people squirming in it like parasites. That was an undead known as Viscera Egg. The intestine pulled the guard over.

"Yahh!" Before others could help him, the guard fell with a scream… "Help! Save me! Ah, yahh—", the shriek started again. All the guards saw the terrible fate of their comrade as he was eaten alive by the congregation of undead. The armor protecting his body and the action of protecting his face prolonged this cruel moment. Fingers, calves, face, all of them were stripped bare.

"Fall back! Down the walls!" Seeing the Viscera Egg squirming again, the captain sounded the retreat. All the guards rushed down the stairs and the sound of the undead banging the gate became louder, the creak of the gate became even clearer. The feeling of despair grew stronger. The chances of reinforcement coming before a stronger undead appearing were too slim. Once the gate opened, the wave of death would rush forth, leading to the demise of countless lives.

When despair was written on the faces of all the guards, the sound of metal clanking could be heard. Everyone looked towards the source on reflex. Before them was a warrior in full armor riding a monster with black intelligent eyes. Besides him was a beauty who was out of place with the surroundings. "Hey! It's dangerous here! Hurry up and leave—"

At this moment, the guard saw the medal dangling before the warrior's chest. An adventurer! But the flicker of hope was extinguished when they saw it was a copper medal. There was no way an adventurer of the lowest level could resolve this crisis. All the guards showed faces of disappointment. The warrior leapt off the monster nimbly and showed no signs of bulkiness.

"Didn't you hear! Leave this place at once!"

"Narberal, hand me my sword." The warrior's voice was obviously softer than the guards, but despite the noise of the swarming undead it was unexpectedly clear. The beauty came to the side of the warrior and drew the sword from his back. "Look behind you, it's dangerous alright?" Heeding the warrior's warning, the guards turned back and witness their end looming before them. There was a figure that was taller than the 4 meters high wall. It was a giant undead made from countless corpses and ghouls.

"Wahhhh—", as the group screamed and was about to run away, something surprising happened before them. That warrior held his sword with the stance of throwing a spear. What was he doing? This question dissipated in the next instance. The warrior hurled the sword out at an unbelievable speed. The guards tracked the place the sword flew and saw something even more incredible.

The giant made from the undead, the undead monster that seemed impossible to defeat was staggering backwards as if it was hit by an even bigger enemy. It then fell, a colossal sound erupted, proving the giant had indeed fallen.

“The undead are in the way.” The dark warrior only said this as he drew the other sword and strode forward… “Open the gate.” The guard couldn’t grasp what he was saying immediately, only understanding after blinking a few times. “Don’t, don’t speak nonsense! There is a huge mob of undead on the other side of the gate!”

“And so? What has that got to do with me, Momon?” Facing the absolute confidence of the dark warrior was stunned beyond words. “…Never mind, it couldn’t be helped if you don’t want to open, I will go over myself.”

The warrior started sprinting, leaped off the ground and disappeared on the other side of the wall. And he was in full armor too. The scene was like an illusion. The guards couldn’t believe what just happened, staring with their mouths wide open at that empty space. The beauty who was left behind rose gently into the air and was about to go over the wall when she was stopped: “Please wait. Do take this king along with you!”

The sound came from the powerful monster the warrior was riding, its voice was as dignified as its appearance. The beauty frowned her brows slightly — which didn’t tarnish her beauty — and answered: “…Climb the stairs over there. You won’t be immobilized just from falling from this bit of height, right?”

“Of course! This king wants to rush to master’s side! Wait for this king, master!”

The giant monster ran past the guards at a great speed, agilely climbed the stairs and jumped off the wall. The scene turned silent. It was like the aftermath of a storm, they stood stunned in place for an undetermined amount of time. When they gathered themselves, a guard asked in a trembling voice: “Hey… Do you hear that?”

“Hear what?”

“The sound of the undead.” Even when they strained their ears, they couldn’t hear anything. The endless banging on the gate had also stopped. The frightened guard shivered as he mumbled.

“Hey, do you all believe this? That warrior… In the face of that huge mob of undead, he easily broke through… And proceeded ahead unharmed.” The guards felt shock and admiration. The noise subsided because the undead were drawn away from here by a new target. It was still quiet because they were still in combat and had yet to return. This unbelievable thought compelled the guards to climb up the walls. The scene before them made the guards question their eyes as they couldn’t help but groan: “What happened… That warrior… Just who is he…”

They could only see the countless bodies lying on the ground. The corpses piled up like a hill, the entire cemetery was filled with fallen bodies. Some of the dead still had their negative life force, but they could barely move their body and lost their ability to fight. The rotten stench came with the wind as expected and the sound of fighting could be heard in the distance.

“…No way… They are still fighting? They broke through the huge amount of undead! That is unfathomable…!”

“Who in the world is that warrior!?”

"…I think he called himself Momon… Being a copper medal adventurer with such skills is too outrageous, it is impossible. He should be the legendary possessor of an adamantite medal right?" Everyone nodded in agreement with that assessment, that skill was definitely not a copper medal adventurer. He should be the owner of the highest medal, a hero. There was no other possibility. "We… Probably saw a legendary figure… Dark warrior… No, dark hero…" That mumbling made everyone nod.

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A flick of his right hand sent an undead flying, a flick of his left cut another in half. Ainz's storm of one hit kills finally stopped. "Annoying minions." Ainz's hands were holding the swords that were magically created again, looking at the undead in the surrounding with irritated eyes. He pointed the filth-stained swords at them. The undead were in an uproar, trying to get away from Ainz. The undead who shouldn't know fear seemed to feel just that from Ainz.

"…This king apologizes for its action." The voice came from somewhere high above Ainz. The Virtuous King of the Forest floated in the air with its limbs spread out and whiskers drooping, it sounded depressed. The one answering wasn't Ainz. "Just… Behave. It is hard to carry you if you fidget around." Narberal's voice came from the Virtuous King of the Forest's stomach. Because the Virtuous King of the Forest wasn't able to fly by itself, it was being lifted from below by Narberal, who had activated flight magic. Half of her body was pressed into the soft belly of the Virtuous King of the Forest. "This one is very sorry…"

The low-tier undead who lacked intelligence didn't show hostility towards Ainz. They were sensitive to 'life', so they sensed that Ainz was from their own kind. But they couldn't let go of the 'life' of the Virtuous King of the Forest that appeared later. This dragged Ainz into this chaotic battle. Narberal lifted the Virtuous King of the Forest with her flying spell so that the undead couldn't touch and hurt it. When Ainz took a step forward, the undead would take a step back.

Their distance remained the same in this encirclement. The encirclement with Ainz in the center moved according to Ainz's pace. The undead seemed to be searching for an opportunity to attack, but anyone who step forward would be destroyed by Ainz with one hit. So the undead simply encircled Ainz, not daring to engage. There had been countless examples of undead being decimated when they get close. Even the undead who lacked intelligence learned from this and formed this encirclement.

"But this would become a stalemate." Ainz complained about the number of undead left. If Ainz broke through seriously, an undead mob of this level wouldn't be a challenge. But if he broke through forcefully, the undead might scatter, which might lead to the guards nearby getting killed. He would then lose his eye witnesses, failing Ainz's goal of being 'the adventurer who resolved this crisis'.

So he had to lure the undead as he advanced in order to ensure the safety of the guards. But this resulted in the progress becoming slow. But Narberal took his words literally: "Let's call for reinforcement from Nazarick. With a few dozen helpers, we could decimate the scum opposing Ainz-sama in this cemetery."

"…Don't be stupid. I have told you the reason for coming to this city several times."

“But Ainz-sama, if you want to gain fame, it would be better to wait for the undead to break down the gate, and make an appearance after there are more victims, wouldn’t it?”

“I have thought about that. If we knew information like the enemies’ objective and the combat prowess of this city, we could possibly do that. But with the lack of information, we need to avoid losing the initiative. If everything went according to the opponent’s script, it would be displeasing. And based on my observations, other parties might come in to snatch the glory.”

“I see… Ainz-sama is amazing. To consider every angle, as expected of the Supreme Being, I am once again awed by you. Speaking of which… Maybe you could enlighten me about something. If we send servants proficient in concealing themselves, like Eight Edge Assassins and Shadow Demons to observe the situation before any major developments, wouldn’t that help us act at the best moment?”

Ainz looked at the flying Narberal silently. The air flowed quietly. Thinking this was a chance, some undead stepped forward and was cut down by a casual sword swing. “…If, if I have to teach you everything, how would you learn? Think about it yourself.”

“Yes! My humble apologies.” Ainz who was slightly shaken turned his head back to gauge the distance from the gate, and whether the guards could see him.

“That, that might be so, but time is pressing. In order to cut open a path, I will use my powers.” Ainz released his abilities. ‘Create Mid-tier Undead, Jack the Ripper’. ‘Create Mid-tier Undead, Cadaver Collector’. Two undead appeared after Ainz activated his skills. One of the undead wore a mask with a smiling face and an overcoat. The lower half of its fingers were large surgical knives.

The other undead had a burly body shape and pustules all over its body. The bandages all over its body were yellow with several steel hooks. The hooks were connected to a chain leading to moaning skulls. The two undead obeyed Ainz’s command and attacked the undead mob that had gathered. There were just two, but they had the upper hand in terms of power. While Jack the Ripper cut off the undeads’ limbs with its surgical knifes and the Cadaver Collector tore off the undeads’ head with its chain, Ainz continued to use his skills.

“I will settle all this at once.” ‘Create Low-tier Undead, Wraith’. ‘Create Low-tier Undead, Skull Vulture’. After summoning, he ordered them: “If anything comes into the cemetery, chase them out. It’s fine to kill the adventurers, but don’t harm the guards.” The body of the wraith disappeared like a shadow while the skull vulture opened its bony wings and took flight. Having finished his preparations, Ainz laughed. Sending out the low-tier undead as a precaution to prevent adventurers from taking out the mastermind with flying magic and steal the glory of this job.

“Let’s go then.” The two undead that were summoned displayed their skills, letting Ainz broke through the diminishing amount of undead. Ainz with only Narberal in toll came to the shrine near the depths of the cemetery. He saw several suspicious figures in a circular formation before the shrine, conducting some sort of ritual. The black robes covering their bodies were unevenly dyed and of poor quality. They used a triangular cloth to cover their face, showing nothing but their eyes. The tips of the wooden staffs in their hands had strange engravings.

They were short in stature and judging by the silhouette of their bodies, all of them were male. Only the man who looked like an undead in the middle was showing his face, and his clothing was elegant. The man held a black stone in his hand and seemed to be concentrating. Their soft whispers were transmitted into Ainz's ears with the wind. Their pitch changed in unison and sounded like a prayer, but it didn't feel like the solemn prayer offered to those who had passed on and more like an evil ritual desecrating the dead.

"Shall we launch a sneak attack?" Narberal said softly into Ainz's ears, but he shook his head and said: "It's useless. They seem to have noticed us." Having no special abilities to hide himself, Ainz just walked boldly towards them… He avoided the light of the cemetery as he moved, but the enemy could see as clear as day if they used 'Night Vision'. From Ainz's experience, the summoner and the summoned monsters had a telepathic link.

After killing so many undead, by now their opponent should have detected Ainz's approach. In fact, several of them were staring at Ainz's group. They probably didn't attack because they had something to say. That was Ainz conclusion while he walked towards them. When Ainz group walked into the light, the suspicious group took a stance and one of them told the man in the middle: "Khajit-sama, they are here."

Okay, they are definitely stupid… No, maybe they are just pretending to be retarded. Let's hear what they want to say.

"Ara, what a beautiful night. Don't you think it is a shame to waste it on boring rituals?"

"Hmmp… I will decide if it is suitable for rituals. Anyway, who in the world are you? How did you break through that mob of undead?" The man in the middle of the formation — if it wasn't an alias, this man called Khajit had the highest status here — asked Ainz on behalf of everyone. "I am an adventurer who was commissioned a quest to search for a missing youth… You should know who without me saying the name right?"

The group took a stance, confirming Ainz's suspicion that they were not innocent bystanders. Ainz looked from under his helmet at Khajit who was scanning the surrounding with a bitter smile. "Is it just the few of you? Where are the rest?"

Hey, hey, would anyone ask like that? He might be on guard against ambushes… But ask after using your brain a little. From the looks of things, this guy is nothing but an abandoned chess piece. Ainz shrugged weakly and replied: "It's just us. We flew all the way here using flight magic."

"Lies, that is impossible."

Ainz felt there was a hidden meaning behind Khajit's confident words and asked: "Believing or not is up to you. Back on topic, if you return the youth unharmed, I could spare your life alright? Khajit." Khajit glared at the moronic disciple who addressed him by name. "And your name is?"

"Before that, I have something to ask. Apart from you all, is there anyone else?"

Khajit looked at Ainz with cold eyes: "It's just us—"

"It's not just you, all right? There should be someone using melee weapons… Planning a surprise attack? Or are they hiding because they fear us?"

“Ohh~ You investigated the corpse~ Impressive~” A woman’s voice came from the direction of the shrine. The woman showed herself slowly, a metallic clanking sound could be heard with every step she took.

“You…”

“Ara~ We’ve been found out~ It’s pointless to keep hiding. By the way~ I was only hiding because I am unable to use ‘Conceal Life’~” The woman smiled bitterly, replying to Khajit who sounded rather fierce. Despite showing a strong front, they still didn’t use the hostage Nfirea… Maybe Nfirea was already dead. As Ainz was thinking about that, the woman asked: “Could I know your name? Ah, I am Clementine. Pleased to meet you.”

“…It’s useless, but I will humor you. I am Momon.”

“I have never heard that name before… What about you?”

“Me neither~ I have gathered information about all the high rank adventurers in this city, but there wasn’t anyone named Momon. Why do you know about this place? The death message indicated the sewers though~”

“The answer is under your cape. Show it to me.”

“Wahh~ Pervert~ Ecchi~” After saying that, the woman’s, Clementine’s face twisted. Her grin was so wide it almost reached her ears: “Just kidding~ You mean these?”

Clementine lifted her cape, revealing a scale armor with a multitude of colors. But Ainz excellent eyesight saw through the truth behind the armor immediately. This wasn’t a scale armor, but metallic medals. There were numerous adventurer-medals there. Platinum, silver, iron, copper, there were even mithril and orichalcum too. These proved that Clementine had been killing adventurers and taking their medals as trophies. The clanking of the metals was like the grudging moans of the dead.

“It was these trophies… That told me about this place.” Clementine had a baffled expression but Ainz didn’t want to explain. “…Nabe. Take care of the men including Khajit. I will take on this woman.” After Ainz finished, he warned Narberal in a soft voice to pay attention above her. “Understood.” Khajit smiled mockingly while Narberal had cold eyes and an uninterested expression.

“…Clementine. Let’s fight over there.” Ainz didn’t wait for Clementine to respond and walked away. He was very sure his opponent wouldn’t refuse, and the sound of leisurely footsteps behind him proved his point. After going some distance, the place where Narberal and Khajit were at was hit by a brilliant and deafening lightning. This lightning was like a cue, prompting Ainz and Clementine to glare at each other.

“Could it be that the people I murdered in that shop were your companions? Are you angry because your comrades are dead~?” As if she was mocking, Clementine continued: “Hahaha, that magic caster was hilarious. Believing someone would come to the rescue ‘till the very end~. It was impossible to last ‘till help arrived with that tiny bit of stamina… Was that rescuer supposed to be you? Sorry~ I killed them.”

Ainz shook her head at Clementine who was all smiles: "…No, no need to apologize."

"Really? Such a pity~. It is really interesting to infuriate those who get agitated when their comrades get mentioned. Hey, why are you not angry? How boring! Are they not your companions?"

"…I did similar things too, so I would be acting willfully if I was to accuse you."

Ainz lifted his sword slowly: "…They were tools to raise my fame. After they returned to the tavern, they would've spread stories of my exploits to other adventurers of how just the two of us defeated the Virtuous King of the Forest. Interfering with my plans displeases me."

Something in Ainz's tone made Clementine smile: "I see~ How sad of me to be despised by others~ Oh right, choosing to fight me is a mistake~. That beautiful girl is a magic caster right? It's impossible for her to win against Khajit-chan~. If the two of you switch, you might win if you were lucky. But that woman won't win against me either~"

"To win against you, Nabe is more than enough."

"Don't be silly~. A mere magic caster won't defeat me. It would be over before you know it~. That's how it has always been~"

"I see, you are confident in your prowess as a warrior…"

"That's obvious. In this country there are no warriors that can defeat me~ Correction, almost no warriors that can defeat me~"

"Is that so… I thought of a good idea. I will give you a handicap and exert my revenge this way."

Clementine squinted her eyes and expressed unhappiness for the first time: "According to the intelligence from the Windflower guys, there are only five people who could put up a fight against me. Gazef Stronoff, Blue Rose's Gagaran, Crimson Droplet's Lucen Bagel, Brain Unglaus and the retired Wise Croft de Lofan… But they wouldn't beat me even if they held nothing back. I could even do that without the magic item bestowed to me by the country."

Clementine showed a disgusting smile to Ainz: "I don't know how disgusting your face is under that helmet, but I, who has gone beyond mortal limits~ and stepped into the realm of heroes, will never lose!" Compared to the fired up Clementine, Ainz was calm and collected: "That's the reason why I will offer you a handicap. I won't go all out."

Chapter 4: The Twin Swords of Death, Part 4

"「Double Maximize Magic: Electrosphere」." In Narberal's open palms were two lightning balls that were twice as big as normal, which she fired simultaneously. …Strike… The lightning ball with its magnified power expanded rapidly, the giant lightning ball that flew out had a wide range, illuminating the area surrounding the cemetery as bright as day. The magic powered lightning dissipated in an instance and its destructive power was immense. Khajit's underlings who were caught in the effective area fell to the ground. Only one man remained unmoved.

"Really… Why didn't you fall like those lower life forms (caterpillar)…? Did you activate 'Negate Lightning Element'?" Narberal asked and saw that Khajit's face showed signs of burns. In that case, it should be a lower tier spell than 'Negate Lightning Element', 'Resist Lightning Element'. Narberal felt it was a pity that she couldn't wipe them all out in one strike, but consoled herself that this was within the acceptable range. It would be too dull to settle it with just one hit.

"You are not a simple idiot, but an idiot that can use 3rd tier magic!"

"…Idiot? This lower life form (tick) dares call me an idiot!" Narberal frowned.

"Anyone who foolishly attempts to derail my plans is obviously an idiot. Not knowing my might and rushing here to meet your end! My preparations are done! Let me show you the power of the supreme pearl fully charged with negative energy!"

Khajit lifted the pearl in his hand. It shone like a black lump of iron, a plain pearl. It wasn't polished and the shape was rough, so it was closer to being an ore. Narberal saw the pearl was pulsating. Suddenly, the six disciples who were burned all over by the lightning got up. That wasn't the movement of a living being. The six disciples were manipulated by undeath, stumbling into the space between Narberal and Khajit. Narberal looked at the scene before her irritably.

"Sending zombies to be my opponent?"

"Hahaha, that's right. That is more than enough! Attack!" Zombies, the lowest tier of undead, didn't have the ability to use magic. Narberal cast a spell on the six disciples closing in with their claws extended. "「Electrosphere」." A ball of white once against electrified the surroundings, swallowing the disciples which were in range. The lightning dissipated instantly and the disciples fell once again. The enemies were disposed of easily, but Narberal didn't look happy. 'Create Undead' wasn't able to spawn multiple undead at the same time. This must be the result of her opponent using some special support skills.

Narberal shifted her sights onto the black ball in Khajit's hand. The power of that item allowed Khajit to control multiple zombies at the same time. *To name it the Supreme Pearl with merely such effects. Only the Overlord of the Great Tomb of Nazarick and the 41 Great Beings that created us are worthy of the title 'Supreme'.* While Narberal was feeling displeased, Khajit said happily: "Enough! It has absorbed enough negative energy!"

The black ball in Khajit's hand absorbed the darkness of this cemetery and seemed to be glowing. It seemed to be pulsating like a heart, and was beating stronger than before. If it was left alone, it could become troublesome in the future. Narberal was about to act after judging so, but then she heard a sound. It was the sound of the wind. Remembering the warning of her master, Narberal leapt up strongly. A giant object swiped down next to Narberal, floating slowly towards Khajit and landed.

It was a being made from bones and about three meters tall. Composed of countless human bones, it was mimicking a mythical creature with a long neck, wings and four legs, a dragon. The tail formed from numerous bones slammed the ground powerfully. It was a monster known as Skeletal Dragon.

The level of such a monster wasn't high for Narberal, but a feature of the Skeletal Dragon was dangerous to Narberal. Narberal looked surprised for the first time. "Hahaha!" Khajit's unrestrained laughter erupted from all sides. "The Skeletal Dragon with absolute resistance against magic, a powerful enemy that renders magic casters helpless!" If Narberal's spell wouldn't harm the Skeletal Dragon, then—

She took out her sword along with the sheath, the weapon her Master insisted she should carry just in case. The sword was tied onto the sheath with ropes so it couldn't be drawn easily. "I will beat you to death." Narberal took a step out. Narberal deftly dodged the Skeletal Dragon's foreleg swipe and wanted to counter attack. As the swipe raised a gust of wind, Narberal made her way to the Skeletal Dragon's chest.

She used all her might and swung. The three-meter-tall Skeletal Dragon was sent flying. Followed by the tremble as it hit the ground. "What!?" Khajit was dumbfounded. The Skeletal Dragon was formed from bones, so it looked rather light. But that was just the appearance. Arcane magic casters sought the mastery of spells every day, and shouldn't have the strength to give such a blow.

Khajit hid behind the enormous body of the Skeletal Dragon and yelled: "You… Who the hell are you! Could it be Mithril…? No, orichalcum rank adventurers!? There shouldn't be any adventurers like that in this city, did you follow me or Clementine here!?" Khajit ground his teeth irritably. "Yes, this kind of agitation suits lower life forms (burrowed click beetle) well."

"You, you!"

How could the Skeletal Dragon, which exhausted so much negative energy and took the grand ritual two months to create, lose so easily. This was his Magnus Opus that took years of planning to execute. While Khajit's face was red from anger, the Skeletal Dragon stood up slowly with cracking sound. The bones forming the chest had a giant fracture with fragments falling off constantly. It couldn't take any more hits.

"No! No! No! 「Negative Ray」!" Black rays shone from Khajit's hand onto the Skeletal Dragon, repairing the Skeletal Dragon's damage with negative energy. "It has absolute resistance against magic, but it can be healed with spells." Ignoring Narberal's nit-picking, Khajit continued casting magic: 'Reinforce Armor', 'Lesser Strength', 'Flame of the Dead', 'Barrier'. Khajit kept casting spells to strengthen the Skeletal Dragon. The skeletal body of the Skeletal Dragon became tougher and stronger from magic, a dazzling black flame covered its entire body. There was even an invisible barrier before its body, shielding it from attacks.

“If that’s the case, I will do that too.” ‘Reinforce Armor’, ‘Barrier’, ‘Negative Element Resistance’. Narberal activated defensive spells too. After both sides cast their defensive magic, the battle started anew. Narberal swung her sword. It hit the front leg of the Skeletal Dragon dead on, but Narberal frowned. Although she could hit the opponent easily like before, the situation wasn’t good. She wasn’t proficient in melee combat and the weapon wasn’t suitable.

The Skeletal Dragon’s body was made from bones, so piercing and slashing weapons were ineffective. Since Narberal didn’t have any blunt weapons, which would be the most suitable, she could only use the sheath. She had the upper hand, but the balance of her attack was poor and she was unable to effectively damage the Skeletal Dragon. A professional warrior might be able to achieve balance, but Narberal was a magic caster, she was not proficient with this.

The front limb of the Skeletal Dragon swiped over the head of the squatting Narberal. The black flames covering the Skeletal Dragon burned Narberal who evaded the attack, but ‘Negative Element Resistance’ nullified the effect and the black flame disappears without a trace. If she didn’t cast protection spells in advance, Narberal would had been hurt from the effects even if she did dodge the attack.

“「Negative Ray」.” Khajit healed the Skeletal Dragon with his magic rays. This was another reason Narberal was frowning. No matter how much damage she dealt, Khajit would restore the Skeletal Dragon from behind. Narberal wanted to take out Khajit first, but the Skeletal Dragon was in the way, stopping her.

Even if she used piercing spell such as ‘Lightning’, it would be blocked by the Skeletal Dragon which could nullify magic. Wide area spells like ‘Electrosphere’ would also be resisted by Khajit’s magic defense, making it almost ineffective. If she used mind control to release the defense, it could decide the match at once…

“「Charm Person」.”

“「Undying Spirit」.” Narberal and Khajit activated their spells at the same time. Narberal used a spell that could bewitch humans while Khajit cast a defensive spell on himself that renders mental attacks ineffective. The result was… Khajit smiling victoriously while Narberal clicked her tongue and frowned. Maybe she was distracted by Khajit’s smile, a shadow loomed over Narberal’s face. A white object that covered her entire field of vision appeared before Narberal.

…Impossible to evade. With a flash of inspiration, Narberal rested the tip of her sword on her shoulder, using the blade as a shield. Her sword hand and shoulder took the brunt of the impact which numbed her body. Narberal flew into the air from this hit. This was the result of the Skeletal Dragon’s tail swinging with Narberal’s face as the target.

“Oh, ohh.” Narberal didn’t fall as she landed agilely with both feet on the ground, but she still stumbled backwards. It was a great chance to press the attack, but the Skeletal Dragon stood its ground. It had to protect Khajit, so it couldn’t go too far. Watching the Skeletal Dragon act this way, Narberal waved her arm to relieve the pain and numbness. Khajit showed his face from behind the Skeletal Dragon—

“「Acid Javelin」.”

"「Lightning Bolt」." The green spear-shaped object Khajit cast hit Narberal's body. The javelin of acid should have harmed her, but it was blocked a few centimeters before Narberal's body and dissipated. At the same time, the lightning was also blocked by the Skeletal Dragon and rendered ineffective. Khajit and Narberal glared at each other.

"…Using defensive spells? How troublesome."

"…That should be my line, lower life form (bagworm). How about fighting honorably and stop hiding?"

"Why do I have to come out?"

"Wouldn't it mess up your plans if you are trapped here?" Khajit glared at Narberal when she mentioned that. In contrast, Narberal smiled nonchalantly. "…There's no other way." Khajit who seemed to have made up his mind held the strange ball up to the sky…

"Witness the power of the Pearl of Death!" The ground trembled and Narberal's body followed suit. That was a sign of a gigantic being showing itself. The ground cracked the next moment and a second white beast slowly rose. "…Another one."

"Hmmp! The negative energy has been exhausted. Even so, I still want to dispose of you and your companion. If I spread death in this city, it should recoup its energy!" Compared to the emotionless Narberal, Khajit's shout was full of wrath.

"Phew." After breathing out hard, Narberal charged forward with incredible speed. Khajit wasn't expecting that and was caught off guard. The Skeletal Dragon swiped its foreleg at Narberal who was in its range. Narberal turned to dodge the forelimb's attack, but the other Skeletal Dragon was lying in wait, attacking with its tail with a force threatening to peel the ground off.

Narberal leapt a good distance backwards and the giant tail missed its mark. It suddenly changed direction, went up and smashed downwards towards Narberal. Narberal dodged left to avoid the heavy strike that made the ground tremble, but the Skeletal Dragon on her right closed in and swiped its foreleg.

"Ugh!" Narberal used the sword to block the mighty blow. The weight behind the hit was immense, but Narberal blocked it steadily and pushed back. The Skeletal Dragon staggered back, and there was a short break in the action. "…Just who the hell are you? To defend that with martial arts… How did you train that skill!?"

"Because I was created by the Supreme Being that is greater than God."

"Are you mocking me, idiot!"

"You wouldn't understand even if you learned the truth, to call me an idiot when I mention the Supreme Being… That's why I say humans are lower life forms (planarian)."

Narberal glared at Khajit with sharp eyes. It was a sharp cold gaze that makes you want to back away. Khajit who felt afraid ordered as if he was trying to shake off his fear: "Go! Skeletal Dragon!" The two Skeletal Dragons maintained an adequate distance from Khajit and attacked once again. Dodging the Skeletal Dragons attack while attempting to get nearer, Narberal lost her chance

because of the other Skeletal Dragon's attack. The back and forth went on for some time, and the moment to settle the match finally appeared. "Acid Javelin!"

Narberal unconsciously averted her face to dodge the magic spear coming at her. That was a grave mistake. It had no effect even if it hits, so she could have ignored it. But it was going towards her face, so she dodged on reflex. That was a mistake a magic caster who didn't raise her melee combat skills would make. This mistake had serious consequences.

Pew! With a loud bang, Narberal's field of vision changed drastically. She was flying to one side. She felt a short moment of weightlessness before falling heavily to the ground. Her left hand was hit by the Skeletal Dragon's tail attack. Rolling on the ground made her dizzy and she couldn't tell where she was. Her body was protected by multiple spells, so it didn't hurt, but the two Skeletal Dragons were lifting their forelegs on top of Narberal. It's hopeless, that would be normally the case.

"I will spare your life if you surrender." Khajit who was sure of his victory smiled cruelly at Narberal. Khajit wasn't planning on sparing her. His expression was obviously hoping to see the pitiful sight of the girl beg for mercy and still getting ravaged in the end. Narberal propped the upper half of her body up, her face was twisted with fury: "…Mere… Human…"

"…What?" Narberal stared unwaveringly at Khajit: "A mere human like you dare say such arrogant words? You trash."

Khajit, whose eyes were wide open, trembled with anger and ordered Narberal's execution. "Destroy her, Skeletal Dragon!" When the forelegs of the two giant dragons lifted up, Narberal smiled. The subject of Narberal's adoration. No matter how far away he was, she definitely would hear him. "Narberal Gamma! Display the power of Nazarick!"

"…By your command. From now on, I am no longer Nabe, and will handle this as Narberal Gamma." The skeletal forelegs of the Skeletal Dragon stomped down, attempting to squash Narberal. Narberal activated her spell in the nick of time. "「Teleport」."

Narberal's vision changed to a different scene. Narberal was five hundred meters overhead. Since she didn't have wings, she dropped straight down. The howling wind slapped against her body as the ground got closer. Narberal laugh out loud: "「Flight」." Her speed of descent slowed and Narberal floated in the air, looking down at the scene of battle below. Khajit and the two Skeletal Dragons couldn't see Narberal and were looking around in surprise.

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"Sigh~ I am tired~" Ainz heard Clementine's carefree words. After a few minutes of battle, Ainz's swords didn't touch Clementine even once. "By the way~. Your abilities are great~ It's worthy of praise~ But~" Her expression changed into the grin of a predator. "~ Are you stupid? You are just wielding your sword with your excellent physical abilities. You don't even know how to feint, swinging your sword around like a kid with a stick. Even if you hold a sword in each hand, you would be better off using just one if you don't know swordsmanship. Are you looking down at warriors?"

"Attack me then. You've been dodging all this time right? It would be disadvantageous for you if this drags on for too long."

Ainz responded with a cold laugh. Clementine frowned. Indeed, Clementine didn't attack Ainz at all. She was just dodging Ainz's attack because of his freakish athletic ability, so Clementine was unable to find a chance to attack. It wasn't as effortless as Clementine made it out to be. Her strong words were caused by her frustration of not being able to take the initiative to attack. "Where did your confidence that no warrior could beat you go?"

"…" Clementine finally drew her weapon after Ainz taunted her. On her waist were four short blades known as stilettos and a morning star. She took one of the stilettos out. Ainz confirmed the morning star was stained with filth that looked like blood and minced meat with his extraordinary eyesight. Ainz tightened the grip on his sword. As both of them were preparing to make a move, the earth trembled. Ainz couldn't look away from Clementine who took a stance and just glanced a little. He saw two giant dragons made from bones where Narberal was fighting.

"…Are those Skeletal Dragons…?"

"Correct~. You are quite knowledgeable. That's right~ that's the nemesis of magic casters."

"I see. That's the reason why Narberal couldn't win."

"That's~ how it is." Clementine regained her cool after the Skeletal Dragon appeared and she teased Ainz. Ainz frowned his illusion face under his helmet. For magic casters, Skeletal Dragons are tough enemies. And there were two of them at the same time, so it was impossible for the current Narberal to deal with them. Clementine seemed to realize Ainz was worried so she made a movement.

This action served to keep Ainz in check and there should be a follow up. For warriors, they would use the chance to attack when they see a stronger enemy than them show a weak point. Clearing the issue with Narberal out of his mind, Ainz thrust his left sword out and waved it slightly to keep Clementine at bay as he readied the sword in his right hand.

Clementine's weapon was the piercing type and lacked variety in attack methods like hack and slash weapons. It was a weapon reinforced for thrust attacks. The delicate structure of the stiletto wasn't strong enough to clash with the great sword. That was why Ainz kept his distance by using the sword in his left hand as he waited for Clementine to get close by herself. But the opponent knew this too.

"You have any way of closing this distance?"

"What do you think~" The crafty Clementine looked calm and collected and had a faint smile. This showed she had a plan. Clementine slowly changed her posture, similar to the starting position of a sprinter, but she was still standing so it was awkward. It looked funny, but wasn't a position to take lightly. At this moment, Clementine took action. Before the tight defense of Ainz, Clementine shot out like a fully loaded spring that had been released.

本小姐克萊門汀
絕對不會輸喔！
我就禮讓妳吧。
我絕對不會
使出全力。

She charged straight on. It was hard to believe, even for Ainz who had extraordinary physical abilities. Like the storm taking everything in an instance, Clementine appeared before Ainz in a blink of an eye, running under Ainz's sword with the agility to match her speed. Facing Clementine's nimble action, the anxious Ainz swung hard with his right hand, attacking Clementine with a power beyond his imagination. At that moment, Ainz saw the grin of that woman became wider. "「Invulnerable Fort」."

The absurd scene shocked Ainz. The slender stiletto blocked the great sword which was ten times its weight from the front. If she blocked Ainz's powerful blow, the short blade would probably break. But even if it miraculously didn't break, it would be knocked away by the strong blow. But Ainz's great sword seemed to have hit a solid siege wall and the blow was deflected back instead.

As if she was throwing herself into a lover's embrace, Clementine charged into Ainz's defenseless chest. Half of Ainz's vision was taken up by Clementine's smiling face. Compared to the retreating Ainz, his opponents attack speed was faster. Combining the momentum of the sprint with all her strength, her strike used the shift in gravity terrifically like a shooting star.

With a flash, a screeching sound erupted in the cemetery. Clementine dodged the counter attack from Ainz's left sword and backed away. Ainz grasped the secret behind Clementine's attack. "Martial arts!" Skills that do not exist in Yggdrasil — the magic of warriors — martial arts which Ainz had to be wary of. The effect is probably defending against sword attacks and nullify the power of a sword. She must have used martial arts to deflect Ainz's attack. "…How tough~. What is that armor made from? Adamantite…?"

It doesn't hurt, but he still heard the sound of friction and the feeling of something sharp hitting his left shoulder. Ainz glanced at the shoulder which received the blow and the armor there was only slightly dented. It didn't have unique powers, but this armor was still created by a level 100 magic caster. The toughness of the armor would increase with level, so the dent was telling of how powerful Clementine's strike was.

"Forget it. Since it's like this, next time~ I will attack somewhere more vulnerable~ I wanted to weaken you slowly and torture you when you couldn't move~. What a pity." After learning Clementine didn't attack his shoulders randomly but was trying to disable Ainz's arm, Ainz felt impressed by Clementine for the first time. Ainz could only wield the sword simply to hurt the enemy. With just one direct hit, he could end his enemy. When facing skilled foes, he had to consider how the fight would flow as the battle went on. *It was a fruitful experience…*

"Well, I am coming~" While Ainz was feeling impressed, Clementine adopted the same forward leaning position like just now. Ainz lifted the great sword in his right arm in anticipation of the attack. He didn't thrust out the left sword this time. Clementine scoffed at Ainz's posture and charged over. She was so fast even Ainz's incredible dynamic vision had a hard time keeping up. If she wasn't coming in a straight line at him, she might escape out of sight. Facing the premonition of Clementine's charge, Ainz swung his right sword to attack—

"「Invulnerable Fort」." And was deflected by the opponent's martial art once again, but this was within expectation. In the previous clash, Ainz lost his balance because he was attacking with full strength, so he held back this time. Absorbing the recoil that was similar to hitting a wall, Ainz swung the great sword in his left hand. Ainz was confident the opponent couldn't block this second strike. But in an instant, Clementine activated another martial art.

"「Full Throttle」." This martial art created an unexpected result. Time in this space seemed to be manipulated. As if he had fallen into a viscous liquid, all his movements were slowed down. Ainz great sword became really slow. But Clementine retained the same speed in this slow world, dodging the sword easily and made her way in front of Ainz. It might be the imagination of Ainz. To prevent his movement from being interrupted, Ainz had a magic ring that prevented his movements to slow down because of external factors or unknown situations. It was probably because the fight with Clementine was intense, that's why he felt her speed increased drastically. Most importantly, Ainz had seen this martial art before and didn't feel this way back then.

"Gaz—", Gazef Stronoff used this martial art before. He didn't finish uttering the name when the stiletto stab towards him. It was aimed at the gap of the helmet, the eyes. Ainz turned his head hard. Although the gap wasn't hit, the sound of screeching steel still reached his ears. Before he had the chance to sigh in relief, he saw from the corner of his vision that Clementine was raising her stiletto, ready to strike again.

"Tch!" Even taking the difference in physical abilities into account, Clementine's straight thrust was faster than Ainz's swing. The stiletto didn't miss this time, scoring a direct hit on Ainz. "Hmmm~?"

"Ugh!" A surprised sound and a panicked voice could be heard at the same time. Ainz pressed his hand against his helmet without letting go of his sword and jumped a huge distance backwards. But Clementine didn't press her attack. Looking at Ainz with slanted eyes, Clementine looked at the tip of the stiletto and said mockingly: "Don't give me any handicap, you will die if you don't use your full power, you know~"

In order to clear her doubts, Clementine continued asking the silent Ainz: "But how did you do that? Being unharmed after taking that hit just now. I was sure it would definitely hurt you~."

"…Ara ara. This battle… Has been very fruitful. It tells me about the existence of martial arts, taught me not to simply use brute force in battle and of the importance of keeping my balance."

"…Huh? Are you an idiot? To talk about this now… You are not worthy of being a warrior. But it doesn't matter since you will die here anyway~ But I hope you will answer my question… Was that a defensive martial art~?"

Clementine spoke as if she has had enough. Ainz smiled bitterly under his helmet, thinking that she was right. "I have much to learn… I am grateful. But time is short, let's end this game." Ignoring the baffled Clementine, Ainz shouted: "Narberal Gamma! Display the power of Nazarick!" Spinning the swords in his hand, Ainz stuck both swords tips down into the ground. Ainz reached out with one empty hand at Clementine, gesturing gently for her to come: "Well then, come at me with the resolve to die."

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"…To really know 'Flight' magic, looks like you aren't putting up a false front. But how did you dodge the attack just now? I was behind the Skeletal Dragon and didn't see…" Narberal who slowly descended from the sky heard the wary questions. Khajit couldn't fathom why she didn't escape using the 'Flight' magic. She could have retreated since she was facing Skeletal Dragons,

which baffled him. “Hmmp, you think you can win? In the face of Skeletal Dragon with absolute resistance against magic?”

“There countless ways to win… But before that…” Narberal grabbed her shoulder and pulled off her robe: “I am Narberal Gamma, one of the battlemaids (Pleiades) who swore fealty to the Overlord of the Great Tomb of Nazarick, the Supreme Being Ainz Gown Ooal. You lower life form (human) should be honored to battle with me.”

Her dressings changed completely. Wearing gold, silver and black metal gauntlets and knee guards. Wearing armor designed after the maid uniform of a comic with a white bonnet taking the place of a helmet. Narberal held a staff that was gold on the inside, silver on the outside.

The abilities of a user-designed item in Yggdrasil could be altered with data crystals. Narberal’s robe included a high-speed clothes-changing crystal. So Narberal didn’t need to waste time changing her equipment and put on her pre-set gear immediately. The robe that was taken off would be put into her item box. Seeing the maid appeared before him, the confused Khajit blinked repeatedly before he grasped the situation—

“What?!” And then he shouted in surprise. Seeing a magic caster morph into a maid was definitely surprising. Khajit felt displeased to see this joke like dressing, but Narberal’s composed demeanor made him feel danger, so he ordered the Skeletal Dragons to attack immediately. The two Skeletal Dragon approached Narberal with unexpectedly nimble movements, swinging their forelegs made up from countless bones. As they were about to hit, Narberal activated her spell.
“「Teleport」.”

“Again!” Narberal disappeared again. Khajit looked up in the sky to search for the missing Narberal, still remembering what happened earlier. But a sense of pain told him where Narberal was. “Ahhh!” Khajit’s scream echoed in the cemetery. Khajit’s left shoulder suddenly burned with pain and the pain spread all over his body with the beating of his heart. The shocked Khajit looked at his wound as the sharp blade was about to be drawn out of it.

“Ugh, ugh!” The sword was pulled out crudely, inducing a sharp pain once again. He felt his bones being grinded, which accentuated his discomfort. Blood sprayed out of the sword wound, staining Khajit’s black robes. Khajit who was drooling from the pain turned his head in a hurry to see what was happening. He saw Narberal standing before him with a puzzled face.

“Is it that painful?”

“…!”

Narberal used her hand that wasn’t holding the staff to toy with the dark, bloodstained shortsword. Khajit couldn’t speak because of the pain. A magic caster who seldom fought in the front wouldn’t experience a lot of pain. And Khajit was usually served by others and the one inflicting pain. That’s why he had such low tolerance for pain. Khajit’s head was sweating as he ordered the skeletal to attack with his mind.

Narberal retreated, putting some distance away from the approaching Skeletal Dragon. The speed of ‘Flight’ was faster than the average speed of sprinting. The two Skeletal Dragons charged into the space where Narberal had been. Hiding behind the Skeletal Dragon, Khajit regained his calm after getting into a safe position and finally understood which spell Narberal was using. That is—

“This is teleportation!” ‘Teleport’ was a 3rd tier magic, but for magic casters, it was just a means for them to escape and put some distance between them and the enemy. But that was the limit for magic casters with poor physical abilities. For magic casters who were as skilled as warriors in melee combat, this spell was as good as an offensive spell.

No, with its element of surprise, it might be stronger than some half-baked offensive spell. Khajit pressed on his shoulder and glared at Narberal: “I see, your ace in the hole is using teleportation to kill me! You used that to escape earlier too right!?” It was a troubling ace. Since spells were ineffective against Skeletal Dragons, Narberal just needed to kill their summoner, an obvious tactic. With her skillful use of teleportation, Khajit might not be able to evade.

But Narberal answered casually: “That’s impossible.” Khajit couldn’t understand what she meant for an instant and kept blinking his eyes. As if to reinforce her explanation, Narberal sheathed her sword: “I’m just showing you that I could kill you easily.” Narberal displayed a way to change her crisis into an opportunity, but gave up on it herself. Khajit couldn’t understanding what she was getting at.

“Are you crazy?”

“You might be a lower life form (flea), but what kind of answer is this? Use your head.” Seeing Narberal’s icy glare, Khajit shivered. He wasn’t shaking from anger… But fear. Uneasiness flooded Khajit’s mind. “It’s about time to end this. As his underling, it is rude to let Ainz-sama wait… You seemed to think spells are ineffective against Skeletal Dragons, so let me enlighten you, lower life form (shore fly). The price would be your life.” Letting go of her staff, the sound of a clap could be heard, white arcs of lightning could be seen between her parting palms. The surrounding air sparkled brightly because of the twisting dragon shaped lightning. Narberal was enveloped by a white glow.

"…Eh." Khajit was dumbfounded. He knew that was an incredible magic beyond his intelligence. He could see Narberal smiling coldly in the glaring white light. Before him was the gigantic body of the Skeletal Dragon. Remembering their presence, a shrill alarm sounded in Khajit's heart. "You think you can defeat Skeletal Dragons with their absolute magic resistance!? Go! Kill her!" Khajit couldn't conceal the fear in his shrill voice as he shouted his orders.

When the two Skeletal Dragon drew near, Narberal smiled like cold master schooling her foolish disciple: "Absolute magic resistance? Skeletal dragons do have resistance against magic, but that is only against spells of the 6th tier and below." The Skeletal Dragon would take a moment more to reach Narberal. In this time, the strangely calm Khajit understood what Narberal meant. "That means the Skeletal Dragon can't resist me, Narberal Gamma, who can use spells of an even higher tier." She was telling the truth. Khajit's instinct told him that. Which means this woman could take out the Skeletal Dragon and send Khajit to hell—

"Why!? The fruits of my labor over 5 years is gone in less than an hour!" The wailing Khajit saw various scenes in his mind like a carousel. Khajit Dale Batantier. Because of work in the village, his father with a chiseled body and his matured mother gave birth to him in a village bordering the Slane Theocracy and he spend a 'normal' childhood there. He turned out like this because he saw his mother's corpse.

That day… When the sun set was still bright, Khajit ran home panting. His mother wanted Khajit to return early, but he was late because of some small matters which he couldn't remember. Searching for pretty stones or holding a stick pretending to be a hero. He was delayed by such insignificant matters.

Khajit ran home fearing the lecture of his mother and saw her collapsed in the living room. When he rushed in and touched her mother, that warm sensation was still fresh in his mind. He felt this was a joke, but things didn't go as he hoped. Khajit's mother was no longer of this world. According to the priest, the cause of death was 'blood clot in the brain'. Which meant there was no foul play, no one was at fault.

No, Khajit felt someone should be responsible. Which was himself. If Khajit had returned earlier, he might had saved his mother. There were many divine magic casters in Slane Theocracy, and Khajit's village had several of them. If he ran to them for help, his mother might still be smiling healthily right now. Her mother's face twisting from pain was all his fault. Khajit made up his mind to fix his own mistake, which meant resurrecting his mother.

The more he learned about magic, the bigger the problem he faced. Divine magic in the 5th tier had a resurrection spell, but it couldn't revive his mother. Because the resurrection will exhaust a large amount of life force, those who didn't have enough vitality wouldn't revive and disappear.

Khajit's mother didn't have any vitality to expend. Khajit didn't have enough time to develop a new resurrection spell. If he gave up his humanity and became an undead, he could buy more time to research new resurrection spells that was his conclusion. Abandoning the divine magic that he had accumulated in the past, Khajit took the path to become an undead through arcane magic. But there was another obstacle in his way.

Even if he took the route of an arcane magic caster, it would take a very long time to become a high-tier undead after abandoning his humanity. He was also limited by his talent and potential,

and might even fail to become an undead. One way to break through these obstacles was to accumulate a large amount of negative energy, that's right, killing the people of an entire city and drawing the negative energy of them becoming the undead. Just when his wish was about to come true, why did another obstacle appear?

"I spent five years to prepare in this city! The wish I couldn't let go after thirty years! Do you have the rights to destroy all this!? You, who suddenly showed up!" A cold smile answered Khajit's howl: "I am not interested in the wishes of a lower life form (you). But your efforts are laughable. I have some words for you… Good work in being the stepping stone of Ainz-sama."

"「Double Maximize Magic: Chain Lightning」." Bursts of dragon shaped lightning came from both of Narberal's hands. The lightning that was thicker than an arm hit the Skeletal Dragon, and shook their massive white bodies. The lightning flowed through the entire body of the Skeletal Dragon, ending its false life.

The results were clear. Under the might of the lightning, the Skeletal Dragon that should have absolute resistance to magic started to shatter. Even after shattering the Skeletal Dragon, the lightning still remained. The two lightning dragons seemed to be searching for their next prey as they flew towards their final target. Khajit's vision was covered by white lightning.

He had no time to beg for mercy or howl in despair. The tears from the corner of his eyes vaporized instantly. Khajit moaned 'mama' as he was swallowed by an even brighter light, pierced mercilessly by the lightning. Khajit spasmed while he was still standing, as if he was performing a weird dance.

After burning the insides of the body, the lightning disappeared, leaving a smoking Khajit rolling on the ground. The charred, burning smell was everywhere. Narberal shrugged, mumbling at Khajit who was now a heap of charred flesh: "Even a lower life form (worm) smells nice after grilling… I wonder if it's fine to give it to Entoma as a present." When she mentioned her colleague who preys on humans, Narberal had a sarcastic smile.

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The warrior was holding up his arms, as if he was waiting for a hug. "…What are you playing at~? Giving up?"

"Give up what? Since I gave Narberal the order, I thought it's time for us to settle this."

"What? Are you daydreaming~? Your martial arts are laughable, do you think you can win against me, the great Clementine? How infuriating."

"It's impressive for the weak to crack such jokes."

The agitated Clementine wanted to rebuke 'that's you right?', but she calmed herself. The warrior skills of the man in front of her were laughable, but his physical might was abnormally good. From what she knew, he was just beneath the two celestials, the Black Scripture's 'Special' and the Chief Captain. He swung the swords chaotically as he pleased, and it would be deadly if she slipped up and got hit.

Acting her usual self, Clementine taunted with a mocking smile: "…Never mind, I agree we should finish this~" The warrior Momon shrugged in reply. Clementine observed the posture of this man calmly. He was full of openings, but that couldn't be all. This must be a trap. But Clementine had no choice. What she said sounded as if she was kidding, but she was actually serious. She could escape with the power of the Skeletal Dragon, but she couldn't waste time.

It was needed to throw the members of the Windflower Scripture off her tail, but she already spent too much time playing around. Clementine squatted down slowly, tightening her grip on the stiletto. Finish the fight quickly. If possible, do it in one hit. Not having time to waste was a reason, but the warrior before her was getting more coordinated in his movements. It would be safer to dispose of him before he grew any stronger.

Breathing out deeply, Clementine sprinted. 'Pace of the Wind', 'Greater Evasion', 'Ability Boost', 'Greater Ability Boost', she used the same four martial arts as before to make up for the difference in their physical abilities. No matter what Momon does, she could still use more martial arts. In the accelerated world, she could grasp the movement of her opponent perfectly. He might draw the sword from the ground or use martial arts, unarmed combat or hidden weapons. No, maybe he would use a throwing weapon. Clementine thought of the dozens of ways her foe might fight. Clementine was confident she could break through all of them. But all of Clementine's guesses missed the mark.

The opponent didn't do anything. The dark warrior simply opening his arms, waiting for the attack to land. A chill went down her spine. This was beyond Clementine's imagination, a fear of the unknown. Should she strike courageously or retreat and escape? She had only two paths to take. Clementine might be cruel and heartless, but she was no fool. In that split second, she rapidly considered countless possibilities and ways to counter.

The last thing that encouraged Clementine was her confidence and pride. She had already left, but she had once been a member of the Slane Theocracy's strongest special unit, the Black Scripture. Someone like her shouldn't be escaping with her tail between her legs in the face of the unknown and unskilled warrior Momon. After making up her mind, the rest of the pieces fell into place. With no hesitation and regaining the calm of a first class warrior, Clementine ran towards Momon's chest… So close they were almost hugging.

"Die~!" Using all the muscles in her body, Clementine shoved the Stiletto into the gap of the helmet. And she twisted her blade forcibly to jab it deep into the brain. Not only that, she was planning to destroy his other organs, to deal him a fatal wound. Although the armored arms were closing in on Clementine in the movement of a hug, she didn't care and continued her attack. Clementine followed through with her thoughts of giving a fatal blow, releasing the magic sealed in the stiletto. The spell was 'Lightning'.

Ainz's body was pierced by lightning. Clementine's weapon was enchanted with a sealed spell. If the sealed spell was released, the magic stored within would be exhausted. But different spells could be sealed within, so a variety of magic could be prepared in advance according to the situation, so it was really convenient. The stiletto stabbed into his skull along with the big lightning present, a definite fatal blow. But—

"I'm not done yet! 「Full Throttle」!" She used her enhanced speed to draw another stiletto and released the sealed 'Fireball' spell within. Clementine imagined the scene of Momon's body

burning from the inside, and thought she smelled charred flesh. But… Clementine was stunned by the unexpected scene before her and opened her eyes wide.

"Hmm, I see. Yggdrasil doesn't have such magic weapons. I learned something new." Even though both of Ainz's eyes were stabbed by Stilettos, he was still speaking casually. This made Clementine realize there wasn't any blood when she stabbed at the helmet's slit earlier.

"No way! How could this be! Why aren't you dead!?" She had never heard of such an invincible martial art. Or he had some ways to deal with piercing attacks? If that is so, how did he defend against the magic attacks that followed? Even Clementine who was a veteran of hundreds of battles couldn't answer this question.

"!" Clementine's body was hugged, pushing Momon and Clementine close together as the adventurer's medals crackled. "Let me tell you the answer." The dark armor disappeared without a trace, revealing the terrifying face below. It was a skull without flesh or skin. In the hollow eye sockets… Where the stilettos had pierced his goggles, but it didn't seem to hurt Ainz.

Clementine knew what that appearance meant: "Undead… Lich!"

"…? I had many things to ask you, but forget it. I can only say your answer is very close. Well then—", Clementine thought that the monster before her shouldn't have any expression since it lacked skin or flesh, but she felt it was grinning. "How do you feel? Dueling with a sword wielding magic caster? Unable to end it in a flash, what did it feel like?"

"Don't, don't look down on me!" Clementine struggled with all her might, but she couldn't move as if she was chained tightly. Liches were powerful undeads proficient in magical abilities, but their physical abilities weren't high. So Clementine should have the advantage. But—

"Why, why!" She couldn't break free. Once she realized that the giant strength — and the powerful physical abilities — weren't the magical effects of the armor, Clementine stiffened. The scene which came to her mind was a helpless butterfly caught in a spider's web. "…This is the truth behind giving you a handicap. An opponent like you isn't worthy of my full power, which is using magic."

"Damn it—!"

"Since the truth is out… Before we start, this is annoying."

With a hissing sound, the Lich plucked the stilettos in his eyes out and threw them to the side. While the undead was picking the blades, Clementine continued struggling desperately. But she couldn't match the power of just one of his arms with all her might. She couldn't alter the hugging position and was immobile. After pulling out both stilettos, the empty eye sockets shone with evil crimson light, looking at the gasping Clementine who was using all her strength.

"Let's begin." Clementine was wary about what her opponent was up to, and was closer to the Lich than lovers. A weird creaking sound could be heard. When Clementine understood what the Lich wanted to do, an icy chill went down her spine. "…No way… No way, you bastard—!" That shrill sound came from her own dented armor. …*He is trying to squash me with his chest!* The Lich

would be subjected to the pressure of the armor too, but he probably used some method to harden his body. His unyielding body was as sturdy as a wall.

"If you are just a bit weaker…" The Lich took out a short sword from somewhere. It was black with four jewels in its hilt. "I would think about using this sword to end you… But there isn't much difference in dying from a sword or breaking your back right? You'll still die."

Clementine was trembling all over. When she heard this casual joke, the pressure increased and the force on her chest felt unbearable. The adventurers' medal she got from murdering others couldn't withstand the pressure and fell to the ground. The first to fall was the silver medal she just got. Breathing became more painful and scary. She hated the arms hugging her. She hated herself for wearing light armor in order to increase evasion and wearing the medals.

Knowing that swords were useless, Clementine punched the Lich's face wildly, but that just hurt Clementine more. Since Clementine didn't have the time to feel the pain, she pulled out her morning star to hammer Ainz, but her position was awkward and she hit herself instead. She could imagine her fate easily. The increasingly painful breathing, her belly that was being flattened and the squashed armor. All these facts told Clementine her fate.

"Stop struggling. I could end you quickly by changing the position of my arms, but you spent lot of time killing them, so I will take my time torturing you too." Clementine attacked wildly. She tried pushing his face away, scratching until her nails were falling off, even biting with her teeth, but all these were ineffective and the unbearable pressure continued. No matter how she struggled, she couldn't break free of the arms' restraint. But Clementine didn't stop struggling, it was hard for her to breath and her vision narrowed.

"The dance of death?" She didn't have the strength to listen to the soft voice. With the sound of vomit, filth was sprayed onto Ainz. The red light within Ainz's eye socket flashed with disgust. Clementine who had been using both of her arms while struggling to escape had become a spasming corpse. Ainz didn't lessen the strength in his arms, but squeezed harder. Shortly after, Ainz felt the sensation of a thick bone cracking against his arms.

Ainz released the body that couldn't even spasm. With a splat, Clementine's body fell to the ground like trash. Her face was twisted into a bunch from pain and horror, a terrible sight. She was like a fish caught from the ocean, her organs visible from her mouth. Taking out his infinite flask, Ainz washed himself clean from the vomit with the endlessly flowing water. At the same time, he said quietly to Clementine: "I forgot to tell you… I am very stubborn."

Chapter 4: The Twin Swords of Death, Part 5

Just as he was feeling unhappy about being wet and dirty in his clothes, Ainz felt as if some kind of huge animal was galloping over. Looking towards the direction of the sound, he saw that it was Hamsuke. Compared to Ainz and Narberal, Hamsuke's combat effectiveness was worlds apart from them, if they had let him participate in the battle, it would've caused unnecessary casualties.

Therefore, they had him on standby a little far away. Hearing that there was no longer any sounds of battle, he must've run over. Realizing that the gigantic hamster's cute face was painted with a certain expression — the worry for Ainz's safety — Ainz felt a little depressed. The gigantic hamster, not knowing that his master was harboring such feelings, using unimaginable speed and agility as he looked around his surroundings, and also at Ainz in a flash.

"Wa—!" Showing his exposed belly, he kept shouting: "…There is a scary monster here! Master—! Master—!" Still feeling some weakness, Ainz held his head. *Speaking of which, I haven't let Hamsuke see my true form yet, but I can't let him continue shouting so loudly anymore.* Looking around, he could see adventurers still fighting against the undead, although it was difficult to judge the distance, they probably could not hear him, but no one could guarantee that.

Ainz, using a stern voice rebuked: "…Stop playing around."

"Eh? This high and mighty voice… So it is my master!"

"…Correct. So can you lower down your voice."

"No way! Such an unimaginable appearance… If I had known earlier of my master's powerful strength… This underling, Hamsuke, would have sworn his undying loyalty even more!"

"I see. But I say again, lower your voice."

"Th-, that is too much master! Please do not treat this king's oath of fealty so lightly!"

"…Did you not hear Ainz-sama's words? Idiot."

Hamsuke's flat body was kicked, flying into the distance. Narberal's foot was where Hamsuke had just been, and slowly went back. "Ainz-sama, this stupid animal probably has no feeding value to it. Could you allow this one to fry it with lightning?"

"No… The Virtuous King of the Forest has a high value, just taking him out onto the road has already shown his value. Back to the point, Narberal, there is not much time, quickly collect all of their belongings. There is a possibility that we have to hand over the remnants to the local authorities, we must quickly discern the value of these items."

"Yes sir."

"I will be in the shrine; I leave the rest to you."

"Yes! May I ask how to dispose of the bodies? Should I transport them to Nazarick?"

"No, perhaps these were paid out by the mastermind of this situation, so just loot them for their equipment."

"Yes sir."

"Painful…" Hamsuke who was running back purposely heaved out a big sigh, making Narberal send him a cold stare: "Compared to giving it their all, more importantly is to listen to the words of Ainz-sama. This is the duty of a servant. For you, who is comparably the most inferior of servants, every word must be said with care, else you will be instantly slaughtered." Hamsuke's whole body shivered.

"Next time it wouldn't be a physical attack, instead it will be a magical punishment. Without going against Ainz-sama's orders, I will let you feel pain until you beg to be killed."

"I understand… Please stop having such a scary expression… But master's new majestic appearance is amazing, truly wise and strong." Narberal's expression warmed: "Of course. Ainz-sama's appearance is truly wise and powerful, to be able to see this much, this means that you still have some insight."

"Thank you for your praise. If this is master's original appearance, then does Narberal-sama also have another appearance?"

"…I am a doppelganger. This face is my ability. See." From her gauntlet exposed three fingers, they were longer than those of a human, looking like inchworms. "I, I see."

"No need to be so surprised, you are also among the servants of the Grand Tomb of Nazarick, no need to cause so much fuss on such a small matter. Back to the point, I need to collect the equipment off these bodies, you should also come help."

"Yes! Understood!"

♦ ♦ ♦

The youth, Nfirea was currently inside the shrine. The youth's brilliant red eyes were dull. The strange transparent clothes that he was wearing were impressive, but Ainz noticed his face. Across his face was a long cut over his eyes, one could also see tears and dark blood clotting, it obvious that he was blind. "But… Blindness can still be cured… Magic sure is convenient."

The problem was Nfirea's condition. Standing straight, he did not respond at all to Ainz's arrival, even though his eyes couldn't see, he should still be able to know if someone stood in front of him. But there was no reaction which meant that his spirit was being controlled. The question was, what kind of control?

"It definitely is this thing." Ainz looked at the crown worn on Nfirea's head, a crown that looked like a spider web. Other than that, there was no other suspicious thing. Extending his hand, thinking about taking off the crown, Ainz suddenly stopped. Since he did not know what caused this condition, he shouldn't act casually. So Ainz cast his magic onto the crown. "「Greater Item Identification」."

In Yggdrasil, using this magic allowed one to learn about the effects of an item. It was also possible to use the spell in this world. No, even worse, a message like in Yggdrasil slowly appeared in Ainz's mind. "…Crown of Wisdom… I see. However… This item would've never existed in Yggdrasil… It cannot be reproduced in Yggdrasil."

After gaining the knowledge, Ainz heaved a small sigh, and thought about what to do. He considered the benefits of bringing Nfirea back to the Great Tomb. The draw of having access to a rare item and innate ability was large. But he hesitated only for a moment. "Since I accepted this quest, deliberately failing it would be detrimental to Ainz Ooal Gown, let's smash it then."

"「Greater Item Destruction」." Ainz cast his magic onto the crown. The sight of it turning into a myriad of tiny lights was beautiful. Ainz warmly held the limp youth, then gently laid him down and looked at his face: "Next… I just need to heal the eyes… But not in here…"

Ainz touched his face, then slowly got up. The undead he had summoned before had not yet been completely destroyed, but there were a few things to resolve first. Soon, reinforcements will surely find this place. Before that, he had to re-apply his illusion and recreate his sword and armor. And there were all the items being recovered as well. Compared to when he PKed in Yggdrasil, Ainz chuckled at the fact that he could take all the weapons and equipment.

Just as he was thinking about whether he should go back and help Narberal loot the items, Narberal appeared at the entrance of the shrine. "Ainz-sama."

"How is it? Have you taken all the items? Including the money?"

"Yes. Just a little question, about this." In the hands of Narberal, who was at the entrance of the shrine, was a black bead, its shape was not flat and it looked like a stone similar to those found near a river, it didn't look like it had any value.

"…What is that?"

"Yes, this looks like the precious item that the lower life form (hairpin planarian) was using during my battle with him. However, I do not know what effect it has…"

"I see." The spells that the NPC Narberal has learned were far less than Ainz, most of them were combat magic, so she was unable to discern the item's worth. Ainz took the black ball, and activated his magic again.

"「Greater Item Identification」." The red light in Ainz's eye shined: "What is this…? Orb of Death? And… Also a sentient item?" The name Orb of Death sounded impressive, but it was nothing special. The item helped supplement the power of the undead, it also allowed one to use multiple necromantic spells in a day, but all these didn't appeal to Ainz at all.

Although this was able to manipulate those who were afraid of the Orb of Death, it couldn't control Ainz, Narberal or any other kinds of demi-humans or heteromorphic races and those who have immunity against mind control.

"Can't be said if this was a good or bad item…" The only point that interested Ainz was the part about being a 'Sentient Item'. Ainz lightly poked it, and almost wanted to ask it to speak, when a voice suddenly appeared in his head. 『Greetings, Great King of Death.』

Hearing the voice, Ainz stared intently at the orb, because in this world that was full of magic and magical monsters, something like this was no reason to cause a huge fuss. "Ah, truly a sentient item." Ainz flexibility rolled the orb in his hand. Then carefully looked, the orb had no sign of speaking. Ainz thought for a while, then said what came into his mind: "I allow you to speak."

『Thank you very much. Great King of Death.』 This made Ainz think about his loyal NPCs back in Nazarick, and gently laughed. 『I am deeply impressed by thy unmatched aura of death and offer my deepest respect.』

I should have dispelled all of my aura spells, how did this item start calling me 'King of Death'. "Continue."

『My thanks, Supreme Lord of Death. For the chance to encounter someone as great as thee, I offer my deepest thanks to all the death in this world.』 Although it sounded flattering, these words seemed like heartfelt words from the heart. Which caused Ainz's spine to feel itchy, he proudly stood tall: "So? Other than flattery, do you have anything else to say?"

『Yes, I know that this may seem disrespectful, but I would like some help to achieve this wish.』

"What wish?"

『Yes. All along, my wish was to spread death across this world, but after meeting you, the Great King of Death, only did I realize what I was born in this world to do… I was born into this world to serve you.』

"…Oh."

『Oh Great King of Death, please accept my oath of fealty. I hope that I could have a place among your faithful servants.』

The voice sounded pretty sincere, if it had a head, it should be bowing down right now. Ainz brought his left fist to his mouth, and started thinking. Thinking about the underlying advantages and disadvantages, whether it could be trusted and more. Ainz carefully looked at the item.

If he considered "safety" then destroying it would be the best option, but for an item that did not exist in Yggdrasil, that would be too much of a waste. After applying a few defensive spells on the orb, Ainz called for the giant hamster at the entrance of the shrine: "Hamsuke."

"What is it Master?"

"Take this." Ainz threw the orb in his hand over. Hamsuke skillfully caught it. "May I ask what this is, Master?"

"It is a magical item. Do you know how to use it?"

"Ah… This one should be able to! But how noisy! So noisy that this one wants to give it back to Master." Narberal stared wide-eyed at Hamsuke: "You want to give it to the newcomer?" Sounding a little out of tone, one could see how shocked Narberal was.

"Although measures have been made to counter its discovery, it can't be said to be completely safe, so I handed it to Hamsuke."

“I see! As expected of Ainz-sama. Such impeccably sound judgement.” In front of him was Narberal, who felt enlightened, and Hamsuke, who was puffing his cheeks which were slightly bigger than a human fist as he nodded his head. Just as he was about to tell the two of them to retreat, Ainz saw his own red cloak and on a playful whim, he grasped the edge of the cloak: “If the recovery is complete, then bring Nfirea along—”, Ainz exaggeratedly waved his red cloak. “And let us triumphantly return.”

Epilogue

The door of the tavern opened. The place turned quiet with countless sets of eyes being focused on Ainz. No one stopped him this time while he made his way to the tavern owner. “You…” All their gazes were directed at the metal plate on Ainz’s neck. Light-heartedly, Ainz said only two words: “Double room.” He put down a silver coin and took the key from the silent tavern owner. Ainz walked into his room and dispelled his magic, reverting back to his true form.

The mithril plate touched the Nemean Lion and made a clear clinking sound. When he told the guild about the incident at the cemetery last night, he received this plate. The silence in the tavern was due to this plate. A man who wore a copper plate just a few days ago had jumped through the ranks.

Now he suddenly appeared with the mithril rank’s plate, it overturned the knowledge they had accumulated over the years about how an adventurer goes through the ranks. Their frank reaction gave Ainz a sense of superiority, but he also felt unsatisfied. His plan was to rise to orichalcum rank in one shot, instead he was one rank below. If he obtained the orichalcum plate, what kind of reaction would they make? But it wasn’t possible.

This incident was only known to a small group. But after explaining how the events unfolded, it was determined that Ainz’s accomplishment was incredible and it should merit a promotion to the adamantite rank. Instead he was awarded with mithril plate because Ainz didn’t have a history of commendable exploits and the investigation was still incomplete. The guild made that decision to err on the safe side. Which means that the higher ups of the Adventurer’s Guild had already acknowledged Ainz to be at the level of the only two adamantite rank adventurers in the Kingdom.

Furthermore, with passage of time, the battle at the cemetery and the name of Ainz, Momon the Adventurer, should definitely spread throughout the Kingdom. The guards who had escaped death would definitely talk about Ainz’s exploits over meals. The plan was progressing so smoothly that Ainz couldn’t help but smile. It was more than just smooth; it was a perfectly executed first step.

Ainz flicked the mithril plate with his fingers as Narberal voiced out her doubts: “Please advise on how to deal with those two? They said that they would contact us with regards to the payment.” Narberal was referring to Nfirea and Lizzie, the two pharmacists. Ainz had already decided what to do with them.

“Lizzie said that she would give her everything, so I told her to bring her grandson to Carne village. I want her to assist me, no, assist the Great Tomb of Nazarick by concocting potions.”

“…Nazarick has people who can make potions too, why do we need these lower life forms (penis fish/fat innkeeper worm) to do that?”

“Because I want fresh sources of power.” Narberal simply stared without any response, so Ainz continued to explain: “Considering that our potion ingredients might dry up, we need to develop ways to create potions outside of Yggdrasil’s current manufacturing methods. We need to research

for new technology that might incorporate techniques of both this world and Yggdrasil. We might even be six hundred years behind in technology. And of course, we have to warn them sternly not to circulate the manufactured potions… But from how she acted, it shouldn't be a problem."

Ainz remembers Lizzie's reaction when he brought Nfirea back. Though he had already healed Nfirea's eyes, he was still unconscious probably due to shock. Even so, Lizzie who found out that her grandson's life wasn't in danger, broke down in tears and expressed with great gratitude that she would definitely pay as promised. "Lizzie's matter aside, we have more pressing matters to deal with."

Ainz activated 'Message' to contact Albedo. Though he received a message from Entoma, he was busy so he could only contact her now. Ainz could only ask them to not bother with him until all are finished. After 'Message' linked with Albedo, the first phrase he heard was far beyond his imagination. 『Ainz-sama. Shalltear Bloodfallen has rebelled.』For a moment, he couldn't understand. After Albedo's words finally made it into his mind, his reaction was really stupid.

"…Huh?"

Afterword

Dear readers, it has been a while. I am Maruyama. There was a little story behind the editing of the battle scene, and that was acting out the movement. My left hand accidentally hit a cup filled with coffee milk. The coffee liquid splashing all over made me want to cry. The beddings were hit, but it wasn't too serious. The draft surviving was a great fortune… Interested readers could try and identify which scene caused the coffee milk to spill. It's that place that stinks of milk. After such hardship, I present to you 'Overlord 2: The Dark Warrior'. I would be honored if my dear readers were to enjoy it.

This story should be recommended to those who tires of the cliché of rescuing the damsel in distress right? Since both gender are equal, rescuing a man should be fine right? The main character always thinks about himself immediately, but if everyone likes such a scheming character, I would be very happy. Let me express my gratitude next.

And So-bin-sama with his wonderful illustration for this book. The finished product was more amazing than what the author had in mind. Inspired by the completed drawing, I rewrote the battle scene seriously. Once again, my thanks to Chord Design Studio for completing the dust jacket and book sleeve. Osako-sama for editing and proofreading the weird parts, thank you this time too. Editor F-ta-san, I have troubled you a lot. And add a bit more red! No, I know it's better without it…

And my good friend from college, Honey, thanks for your help this time too. Lastly, I want to thank all the readers who purchased this book, and the netizens who gave me your comments while I'm still publishing on the web. Thank you very much, everyone's comment had always fueled me with motivation.

So the next volume… Should be more relaxed than this one… Should I review it? I don't really want to… No, I should do it in order to write an interesting work… Oh, well enough of my ramblings, it's about time to say goodbye. I will continue to work hard, and I hope we have the chance to meet again in volume 3.

See you next time.

コキュートス

Heteromorphic
Race

Cocytus

RULER OF GLACIERS

Job	Great Tomb of Nazarick 5th Floor Guardian		
Residence	5th Floor Snowball Earth		
Alignment	Neutral	Sense of Justice:	50
Racial Level	Insect Fighter		10 lv
	Worm Lord		10 lv
	Others		
Job Level	Sword Saint		10 lv
	Asura		5 lv
	Niflheim Knight		5 lv
	Others		

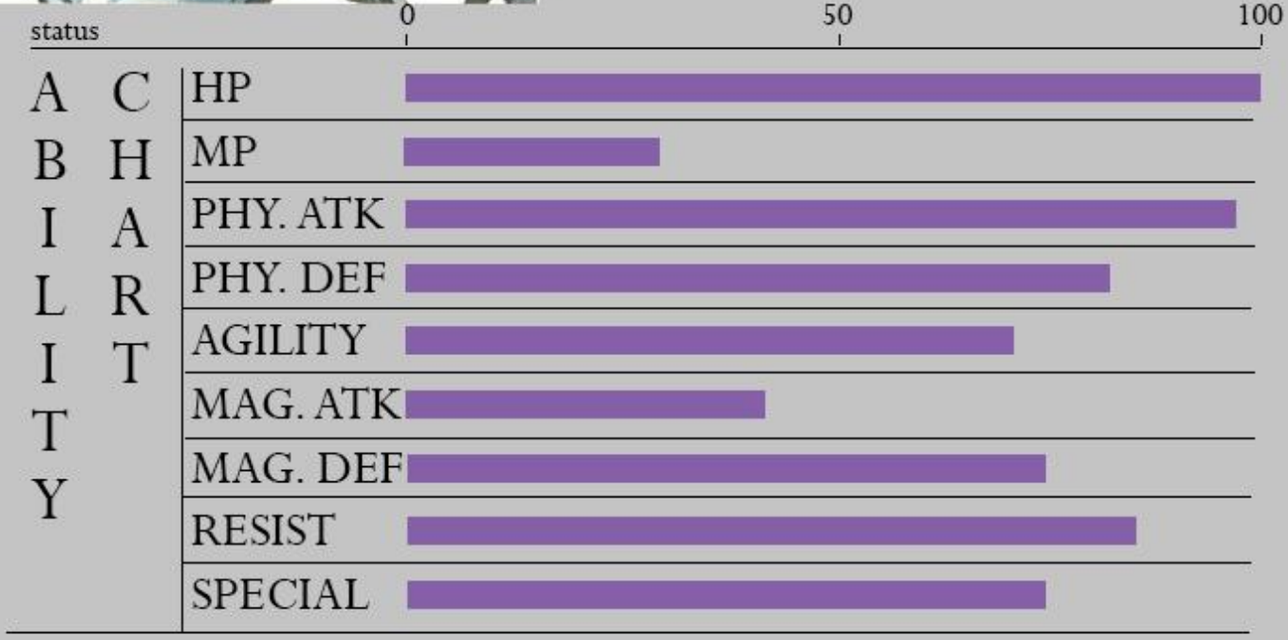
[Racial level] + [Job level] Total 100 level

Racial level — Job level

Total 30 level — Total 70 level

ABILITY CHART

status



デミウルゴス

Heteromorphic
Race

DEMIURGE

CREATOR OF FLAMVELL

Job	Great Tomb of Nazarick 7th Floor Guardian	
Residence	7th Floor Blazing Shrine	
Alignment	Extreme Evil	Sense of Justice: -500
Racial Level	Imp	10 lv
	Archdevil	5 lv
	Others	
Job Level	Chaos	10 lv
	Prince of Darkness	10 lv
	Shapeshifter	10 lv
	Others	

[Racial level] + [Job level] Total 100 level

Racial level — Job level

Total 35 level — Total 65 level

ナーベラル・ガンマ

Heteromorphic
Race

Narberal Gamma (Γ)

INFLEXIBLE BATTLE MAID

Job	Great Tomb of Nazarick Battle Maid	
Residence	One of the servant's room in basement 9	
Alignment	Great Evil	Sense of Justice: -400
Racial Level	Doppelganger	1 lv
Job Level	Warrior	1 lv
	Battle mage	10 lv
	Elemental Mage	10 lv
	Armored Mage	10 lv
	Others	

[Racial level] + [Job level] Total 63 level

Racial level — Job level

Total 1 level — Total 62 level

ABILITY CHART

status

	0	50	100
HP			
MP			
PHY. ATK			
PHY. DEF			
AGILITY			
MAG. ATK			
MAG. DEF			
RESIST			
SPECIAL			

ハムスケ

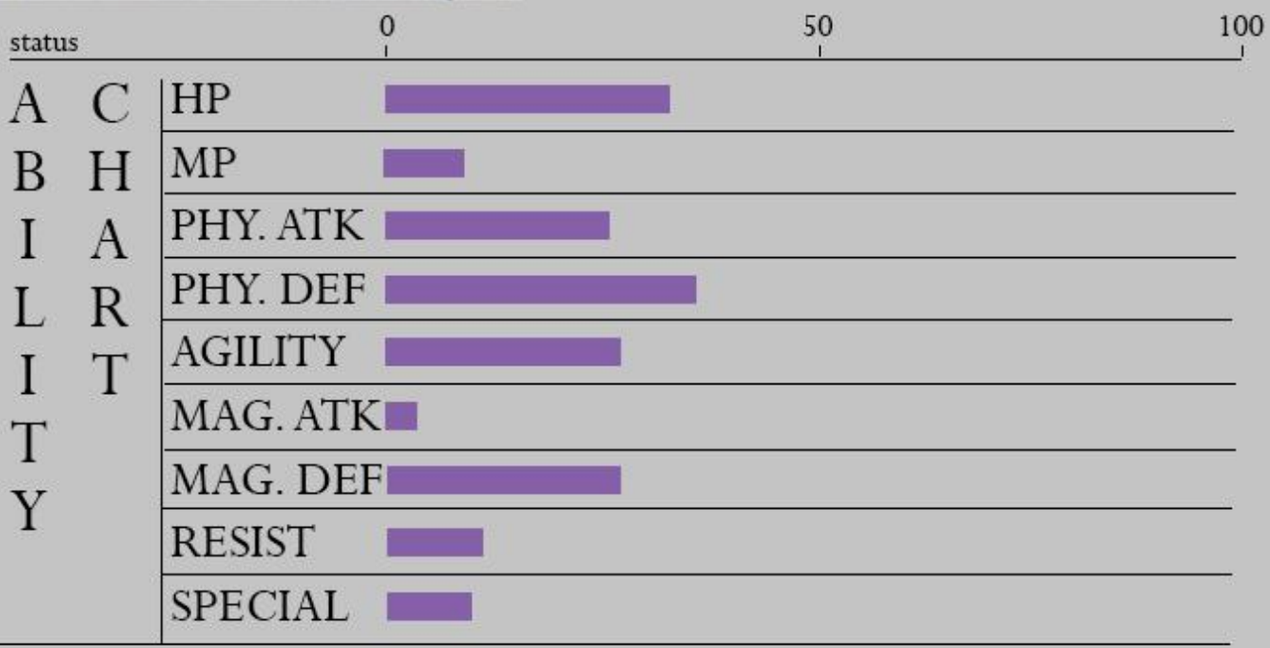
Heteromorphic
Race

HAMSUKE

VIRTUOUS KING OF THE FOREST

(UNDESERVED TITLE *-AINZ*)

Job	Ainz's Pet? (Objection *-Some of the female NPC*)
Residence	Ainz's room?
Alignment	Neutral — Sense of Justice: 0
Racial Level	Unknown, no corresponding race in Yggdrasil.
Job Level	Unknown, no corresponding job in Yggdrasil. *Estimated to be above level 30



Postscript by So-bin

YOUTH IS A GOOD THING

I DREW VOLUME 3 WHILE SMILING HAPPILY... IT'S GREAT TO BE YOUNG.

So-Bin